

**Representations of Italian Left Political Violence  
in Film, Literature and Theatre  
(1973-2005)**

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**Submitted for the degree of PhD in the University of London**

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## Abstract

The thesis investigates representations of ‘red’ political violence in Italy of the so-called *anni di piombo* and later memory of it in selected films, theatrical works, novels and stories. After the **Introduction**, which includes a discussion of aims, key concepts and methods, there are four main chapters. **Chapter One** examines representations of the abduction and killing of Aldo Moro in two thematic groups: those which focus respectively on Moro and the *brigatisti* during the imprisonment and on the Via Fani massacre and the alleged conspiracy behind it. The analysis of these texts serves as a case study, highlighting key themes and issues that will recur in the next chapters. **Chapter Two** deals with texts that link political violence to relations between the generations – conflicts between father and son, relationships between mother and daughter/son – and reflects on the implications of their emphasis on the family. **Chapter Three** analyses texts that centre on women militants. It draws attention to two recurrent female types: the woman who strays from her maternal role in joining the armed group and later seeks ‘normalization’ and the ex-militant who remains committed to her former beliefs, in contrast both to a male character and a female ‘good double’. **Chapter Four** concentrates on the representations of the post-*anni di piombo*. It deals first with self-narratives of Italian political refugees in Paris and then with fictional or semi-fictionalized representations of ‘dramatic encounters’ between former activists, and between activists and their children. A short **Afterword** concludes on the principal findings and reflects on the methodology.

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## Introduction: aims, problems, methods

Il faut dire que l'Italie, qui a déjà donné à l'histoire ses plus beaux spectacles, la Renaissance, Venise, l'Église, le trompe-l'oeil, l'opéra, nous livre encore aujourd'hui, avec le spectacle du terrorisme, l'épisode le plus fertile et le plus baroque, dans une complicité globale de toute la société italienne: *terrorismo dell'arte!*

(Jean Baudrillard, *Les stratégies fatales*, Paris: Grasset, 1983, p. 64)

## Research topic and aims

This thesis is about representations of 'red' violence in Italy of the so-called *anni di piombo* in films, plays and literary texts produced between the mid 1970s and the present. Its aims are twofold. The first is to draw attention to a corpus of works, some well known, others little known or virtually unknown in Italy, which testify to the lasting presence of the years of violence in the social or collective imaginary of contemporary Italy.<sup>1</sup> The second is to demonstrate and explore in these works the recurrences of common characteristics, narrative structures, themes and motifs which

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<sup>1</sup> I do not intend these terms in a particularly precise sense, although various definitions exist. Castoriadis defined the social imaginary as a 'system of significations' which answer the 'fundamental questions' each society sets itself: 'Who are we as a collectivity? What are we for one another?' etc. 'The institution of society is what it is and as it is to the extent that it "materializes" a magma of social imaginary significations, in reference to which individuals and objects alone can be grasped and even simply exist.' Cornelius Castoriadis, *The Imaginary Institution of Society*, trans. Kathleen Blamey, Cambridge: Polity, 1987, pp. 146-7, 366 (original edition *L'institution imaginaire de la société*, Paris: Seuil, 1975). Bill Nichols has called the collective imaginary 'a psychic realm of significant images around which our sense of identity forms' (*Representing Reality: Issues and Concepts in Documentary*, Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1991, p. 8). See also Florence Giust-Desprairies, *L'imaginaire collectif*, Ramonville: Editions Erès, 2003. Although Castoriadis was indebted to Lacan, the use of the term 'imaginary' in Lacanian psychoanalysis (as one of the three orders of the psychoanalytic field, along with the symbolic and the real) is not really relevant here. As Laplanche and Pontalis note, 'Lacan's use of the term "Imaginary" is highly idiosyncratic, yet it is not entirely unrelated to the usual meaning, for he holds that all imaginary behaviour and relationships are irremediably deceptive.' J. Laplanche and J.-B. Pontalis, *The Language of Psycho-analysis*, ed. Daniel Lagache, trans. Donald Nicholson-Smith, London: Karnac Books, 1988, p. 210.

circulate and are reproduced from text to text. These patterns of recurrence are very striking and they show the persistence of certain implicit or explicit interpretations of political violence across the corpus. I have sought, in other words, to identify the ‘order’ developed by these texts around the theme of leftist political violence, in the sense in which Italo Calvino used this term of his own fantasy writings:

Al centro della narrazione per me non è la spiegazione di un fatto straordinario, bensì l'*ordine* che questo fatto straordinario sviluppa in sé e attorno a sé, il disegno, la simmetria, la rete d'immagini che si depositano intorno ad esso come nella formazione d'un cristallo.<sup>2</sup>

I analyse the way the armed struggle, its presumed causes and its effects are represented, and the way these representations either reinforce or challenge existing cultural and ideological norms, embody and reproduce particular values, opinions and judgements. The narrative designs and symmetries in the texts I examine include, among others, recurrent tragic motifs and structures (Chapter One), intergenerational relations and conflicts (Chapter Two), gender deviance as refusal of maternity and ‘normalization’ as repossession of the maternal role (Chapter Three). Familial relations and normalization also appear as the main elements in most of the self-narratives of Italian political exiles (Chapter Four). In order to identify these categories, I have given primary importance in my research to close readings of the texts themselves. Textual analysis has been the first means through which the films, plays and written narratives have been grouped into different sets and by which I have subsequently organized my work into chapters. The categories I have identified in these thematic sets can also be interpreted as ‘plots’ with the meaning that Peter Brooks gives these of being ‘not

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<sup>2</sup> Italo Calvino, *Una pietra sopra*, Turin: Einaudi, 1995, p. 216.

simply organizing structures' but also 'intentional structures, goal-oriented and forward-moving'.<sup>3</sup>

In using the notion of 'representation' I take the view, now widely accepted in media and cultural studies, that representations are not more or less accurate or distorted reflections of a pre-existing reality but constructions, accounts of reality, propositions about the world. As Cohen, Adoni and Bantz have argued, we can only reach 'reality' through collective representations and images and the construction of 'reality' can only be 'social', 'carried out only through social interaction', but this is not to deny the existence of an objective reality or the phenomenological existence of events.<sup>4</sup> Fictional representations are a particular subcategory of representations which sometimes claim to correspond to reality and sometimes do not. Representations, fictional or not, are generally produced out of shared cultural codes which draw on and are mediated by systems of signs: verbal, visual, filmic. Stuart Hall has emphasised the importance of these shared codes in securing the meaning of a representation communicated from sender to recipient:

Representation functions less like the model of a one-way transmitter and more like a the model of a dialogue – it is, as they say, dialogic. What sustains this 'dialogue' is the presence of shared cultural codes, which cannot guarantee the meanings will remain stable forever – though attempting to fix meaning is exactly why *power* intervenes in *discourse*.<sup>5</sup>

There are two main reasons why I have chosen to concentrate my study of representations of political violence on Italy. The first is that political violence was particularly prominent and widespread there, above all during the years 1969-82, an era

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<sup>3</sup> Peter Brooks, *Reading for the Plot: design and intention in narrative*, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1984, p. 12.

<sup>4</sup> Akiba A. Cohen, Hanna Adoni and Charles R. Bantz, *Social Conflict and Television News*, London: Sage, 1990, pp. 34, 35.

<sup>5</sup> Stuart Hall (ed.), *Representation: Cultural Representations and Signifying Practices*, London: Sage, 1997, p. 10.



which is often collectively remembered by Italians in terms of the very high incidence of violent events. According to Donatella della Porta, summarizing the results of the quantitative research she carried out on Italian terrorism with Maurizio Rossi, a total of 351 people were killed and 768 injured in 2,712 terrorist incidents (of both left and right) in Italy between 1969 and 1982. Out of these, the left was responsible for 142 deaths and 190 injuries and a total of 1,200 incidents.<sup>6</sup> Political violence in Italy was prominent not just in terms of deaths, attacks, massacres and murders but also at an everyday level – in demonstrations, clashes between protesters and police, with a use of weapons – and in language. The second reason is that I felt more confident dealing with representations produced in my own language, and I believed that I could produce a closer and more sensitive textual analysis of these materials than if I had attempted a comparative study.<sup>7</sup>

### **Terms and definitions: ‘anni di piombo’, ‘terrorism’, ‘political violence’**

One important illustration of Hall’s point, quoted above, about power in discourse, in relation to the representations examined in this thesis, comes from the history of the words that have been used to name the actions and period they deal with. ‘Anni di piombo’, ‘terrorism’ and ‘political violence’ are all in different ways problematic terms, whose meanings are not stable and whose history has been characterized by lack of consensus over definition. *Anni di piombo* (‘Years of lead’) was originally used as the

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<sup>6</sup> Donatella della Porta, ‘Il terrorismo’, in Gianfranco Pasquino (ed.), *La politica italiana. Dizionario critico, 1945-95*, Rome and Bari: Laterza, 1995, p. 535.

<sup>7</sup> The possibility of making a comparative study with representations of German terrorism did occur to me at an earlier stage of the research, especially when I started working on the chapter on women (Chapter Three). As well as Margarethe von Trotta’s key film, *Die bleierne Zeit* (1981), which I mention in this Introduction and to which I cross-refer briefly in that chapter, there is also Volker Schlöndorff’s *Die Stille nach Schuss* (*The Legends of Rita*) (2000), another striking example of the way female terrorists have been represented.

Italian release title of von Trotta's *Die bleierne Zeit*, literally translated as 'the leaden time' (alluding figuratively to the heaviness and enclosure of prison, the setting of the second part of the film), whose central character Marianne is based loosely on Gudrun Ensslin of the Rote Armee Fraktion who died in Stammheim Prison in October 1977 (the film was released in the UK and the US respectively as *The German Sisters* and *Marianne and Juliane*). The term was subsequently adopted journalistically in Italy as a label for the acute phase of the armed struggle, approximately the second half of the 1970s, because of a mistaken association with the lead in bullets, and it was then used by historians to name this period, or even in some cases a longer period going as far back as the mid-1960s and as far forward as the mid-1980s.<sup>8</sup>

The words 'terrorism' and 'terrorist', widely used in discussions of the events of this period, are especially problematic for three main reasons. Firstly, they name diverse activities by actors of different types with different goals: left and right organizations, manifest actors such as armed revolutionary groups and hidden actors such as secret services and undercover agents. Secondly, they imply a particular judgment of these actions. As Conor Gearty has argued, 'to call an act of violence a terrorist act is not as much as to describe as to condemn it, subjugating all questions of context and circumstance to the reality of its immorality'.<sup>9</sup> Thirdly, they do not usually match the self-descriptions of the actors themselves. The Red Brigades (*Brigate rosse*, BR) and the

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<sup>8</sup> See the chapter 'Anni di piombo' in Paul Ginsborg, *Storia d'Italia dal dopoguerra a oggi. Società e politica 1943-1988*, Turin: Einaudi, 1989, pp. 511-21 (in the English edition the phrase is reproduced in Italian accompanied by the translation 'The Years of the Bullet'; see *A History of Contemporary Italy: Society and Politics 1943-1988*, Penguin, Harmondsworth, 1990, p. 379). The Italian edition of Robert Lumley's *States of Emergency: Cultures of Revolt in Italy from 1968 to 1978* (London: Verso, 1990) is entitled *Dal '68 agli anni di piombo: studenti e operai nella crisi italiana* (Florence: Giunti, 1998). See also Giorgio Galli, *Il Partito Armato. Gli anni di piombo in Italia 1968-1986*, Milan: Rizzoli, 1993; Indro Montanelli and Mario Cervi, *L'Italia degli anni di piombo, 1965-1978*, Milan: Rizzoli, 1991 (Volume 51 of Montanelli's *Storia d'Italia*) and Francesco Malgeri (ed.), *Dal centrosinistra agli anni di piombo, 1962-1978*, Rome: Cinque Lune, 1989 (Volume 4 of Malgeri's *Storia della Democrazia cristiana*). Chapter 9 of Simona Colarizi's *Storia del Novecento italiano*, Milan: Rizzoli, 2000, is entitled 'Gli anni di piombo (1968-1980)'.

<sup>9</sup> Conor Gearty, *The Future of Terrorism*, London: Phoenix, 1997, p. 11.

other armed leftist groups in Italy described themselves as carrying out ‘armed struggle’, a ‘proletarian offensive’ or ‘proletarian resistance’, and when their members were arrested they declared themselves ‘political prisoners’, whereas the state and most of the media referred to them as ‘terrorists’. In a document of 1973 the Red Brigades stated: ‘Organizzare la resistenza e costruire il potere proletario armato sono le parole d’ordine che hanno guidato e guidano il nostro lavoro rivoluzionario. Cosa ha a che fare con il terrorismo tutto questo?’.<sup>10</sup> However, even for some militants of the left, the Red Brigades became ‘terrorists’ with the killing of Aldo Moro. For Toni Negri it was then that ‘the so-called “armed struggle” became terrorism in the true sense of the word’.<sup>11</sup> The state repression that followed Moro’s death spelt the defeat of the extraparlimentary left movement of the 1970s and thereby eliminated, for Negri, ‘the only political network which was in a position to fight against this logic of terroristic escalation’.<sup>12</sup>

Gearty recalls that in their original political uses the terms ‘terror’ and ‘terrorism’ designated a deliberate use of force by a state at war, a ruling faction or the government in order to quell disorganized violence:

The events that actually gave birth to the word in its modern sense (...) involved terror orchestrated not by rebels acting in defiance of governmental authority but by the forces of a state itself. (...) It has been a grievous mistake to lose sight of this first meaning of terrorism as “government by intimidation as directed and carried out by the party in power”.<sup>13</sup>

<sup>10</sup> Quoted in Roberto Massari, *Il terrorismo. Storia, concetti, metodi*, Bolsena: Massari, 1998, p. 367.

<sup>11</sup> Toni Negri, *Revolution Retrieved: Selected Writings on Marx, Keynes, Capitalist Crisis & New Social Subjects 1967-1983*, London: Red Notes, 1988, pp. 241, 242.

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 242.

<sup>13</sup> Gearty, *The Future of Terrorism*, p. 5. Gearty is referring of course to the Terror in the French Revolution. Robespierre, in his speech ‘Sur les principes de morale politique’ to the National Convention of 5 February 1794, connected terror with virtue and democracy: ‘La terreur n’est autre chose que la justice prompt, sévère, inflexible; elle est donc une émanation de la vertu; elle est moins un principe particulier, qu’une conséquence du principe général de la démocratie, appliqué aux plus pressants besoins de la patrie.’ (Maximilien Robespierre, *Œuvres*, ed. A. Vermorel, Paris: Cournol, 1866, p. 301). Saint-Just connected terror and liberty, for example in his speech of 26 February 1794: ‘il faut faire une longue

By the mid twentieth century terrorism had come to be identified overwhelmingly (apart from the rare survivals of the term in a positive sense in the Marxist-Leninist tradition) with violence used against the state by its enemies. The 1937 League of Nations Convention (which never entered into force) stated that ‘the expression “acts of terrorism” means criminal acts directed against a State and *intended or calculated* to create a state of terror in the minds of particular persons, or a group of persons or the general public’.<sup>14</sup> The 1974 Prevention of Terrorism Act in the UK defined terrorism as ‘the use of violence for political ends’, including ‘any use of violence for the purpose of putting the public or any section of the public in fear’.<sup>15</sup> In the definition adopted by the US Department of State in 1984 ‘The term “terrorism” means premeditated, politically motivated violence perpetrated against noncombatant targets by subnational groups or clandestine agents, usually intended to influence an audience’.<sup>16</sup> One effect of the historical shift towards these uses of the word ‘terrorism’, which confine it to non-state actors (‘subnational groups or clandestine agents’), is that the numerous violent acts committed by states, for instance during the Second World War and the subsequent wars fought around the world, which have involved the massacre of millions of people

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guerre à toutes les prétentions; et, comme l’intérêt humain est invincible, ce n’est guère que par le glaive que la liberté d’un peuple est fondée.’ (‘Rapport sur les personnes incarcérées’, in Louis Antoine Léon de Saint-Just, *Œuvres complètes*, ed. Charles Vellay, Paris: Fasquelle, 1908, p. 235). The Bolsheviks picked up this Jacobin legacy in their defence of revolutionary terror against their social-democratic critics. Karl Radek’s *Proletarian Dictatorship and Terrorism* (1919) and Trotsky’s *Terrorism and Communism: A Reply to Karl Kautsky* (1920) were both polemical rejoinders to Kautsky’s *Terrorism and Communism: A Contribution to the Natural History of Revolution* (1919). Trotsky wrote: ‘The more ferocious and dangerous is the resistance of the class enemy who have been overthrown, the more inevitably does the system of repression take the form of a system of terror.’ (*The Defence of Terrorism. Terrorism and Communism: A Reply to Karl Kautsky*, London: Allen & Unwin, 1935, p. 52).

<sup>14</sup> League of Nations, ‘Convention for the Prevention and Repression of Terrorism’, Article 1, Paragraph 2, quoted in Paul Wurth, *La Répression internationale du terrorisme*, Lausanne: Imprimerie de la Concorde, 1941, p. 50.

<sup>15</sup> Quoted in Catherine Scorer, *The Prevention of Terrorism Acts, 1974 and 1976. A Report on the Operation of the Law*, London: National Council for Civil Liberties, 1976, p. 36.

<sup>16</sup> United States Code, Section 2656(d), quoted in United States Department of State, *Patterns of Global Terrorism*, 1999, Washington, D.C.: Department of State Publications, 2000, p. viii.

for political ends, are not considered acts of terrorism. If the state, according to Weber's famous definition, is a community that enjoys a '*monopoly of the legitimate use of physical force [Gewalt]*' within a given territory', then its violence cannot be called terroristic, in the modern sense of the word, and by the same token non-state violence cannot be legitimate and is likely to be described as terrorism.<sup>17</sup>

Alex P. Schmid, who works at the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, has identified 'four main arenas' of the discourse on terrorism: academic, state, public (largely coinciding with the mass media) and that of the protagonists of terrorist acts themselves.<sup>18</sup> The problem of definition, he argues, is that the ideas about what constitutes terrorism held in these different arenas rarely coincide with one another. He himself proposes to define terrorism as 'the peacetime equivalent of war crimes'. He accepts that such a compact definition is more restricted than many others in its range of application and he recognizes the differences between 'terrorists' and 'soldiers', such as the fact that the former do not normally carry weapons openly. However, he considers this definition to be the most appropriate and workable because it is economical, because it benefits from the legal clarity and international consensus over what constitutes a 'war crime' (for instance hostage-taking or attacks on unarmed civilians) and it reflects the fact that often 'terrorists consider themselves to be at war with their opponents'.<sup>19</sup>

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<sup>17</sup> 'Politics as a Vocation' ('Politik als Beruf', 1918), in H.H. Gerth and C. Wright Mills (ed.), *From Max Weber: Essays in Sociology*, London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1948, p. 78 (italics in original).

<sup>18</sup> Alex P. Schmid, *The Definition of Terrorism: A Study in Compliance with CTL/9/91/2207*, Center for the Study of Social Conflicts, Leiden Institute for Social Scientific Research, Leiden University, December 1992. For definitions of terrorism see the major work by Alex P. Schmid, Albert J. Jongman et al., *Political Terrorism: A new guide to actors, authors, concepts, data bases theories and literature*, Amsterdam: North-Holland Publishing, 1988.

<sup>19</sup> Schmid, *The Definition of Terrorism: A Study in Compliance with CTL/9/91/2207*, p. 4.

As for the notion of 'political violence', it too has been the object of disputes over definition and appropriations by various groups.<sup>20</sup> When I speak of representations of political violence in the texts I analyse I do not wish to imply by any means that violence was the property only of the armed groups. In a political context in which violence (and not simply 'force') was used systematically by elements in the state as a means of repression (the *strage di stato*) or to instil fear (the *strategia della tensione*), the use of violence by the extraparlimentary left in certain situations (sometimes with the justification that it was a legitimate defence against a greater state violence) was widely shared among its activists. As for the relations between the latter and the clandestine armed groups, Daniele Pifano of Autonomia Operaia stated in an interview of 1976 that it was not possible to make a rigid distinction between 'costruzione e ruolo del partito rivoluzionario e costruzione e ruolo dell'organizzazione autonoma di massa'.<sup>21</sup>

There has been a protracted debate in Italy about the relationship between terrorism, the *contestazione* of the late 1960s and the political movements which emerged from it. Among the various positions taken, Giorgio Bocca has stressed the continuity between them, and has represented the 'nebulosa terroristica come la valvola di sfogo di una contestazione giovanile che non crede più nei partiti, non ha più fiducia nel riformismo e trova nella violenza organizzata e sporadica il solo modo per sentirsi viva'.<sup>22</sup> An almost opposite position was taken by Sidney Tarrow in his 1989 study on 'protest cycles' in Italy. According to Tarrow, the wave of terrorism began to rise after

<sup>20</sup> Philip Schlesinger in *Media, State and Nation: Political Violence and Collective Identities* (London: Sage, 1991, p. 7) offers three definitions: (i) that of Alan Chesnais, for whom violence is 'injury to persons' with 'three characteristics: it is brutal, external and painful'; (ii) that of the sociologist Robin Williams: 'the clearest cases of violence are those which cause physical damage, are intentional, are active rather than passive, and are direct in their effects'; (iii) that of the philosopher Ted Honderich: 'an *act of violence* is a use of considerable or destroying force against people or things, a use of force that offends against a norm'.

<sup>21</sup> Comitati autonomi operai di Roma (ed.), *Autonomia operaia*, Roma: Savelli, 1976, pp. 369, 383.

<sup>22</sup> Giorgio Bocca, *Il terrorismo italiano. 1970/1978*, Milan: Rizzoli, 1979, p.109.

the curve of the major 'protest cycle', which opened in 1967, had started to fall. He argues therefore that terrorism was a reaction by a minority to the failure of the mass movement rather than a linear continuation of that movement by other means: 'Organized violence was not a property of *il sessantotto*; it was a product of the end of mobilization'.<sup>23</sup> Tarrow had already advanced this interpretation in an article of 1986 co-written with della Porta, which maintained that terrorism occurred 'not as the essence of a period of mass protest – but as a sign of its decline'.<sup>24</sup> The position taken by Umberto Eco to some extent fuses Bocca's and Tarrow's. On the one hand he maintains that 'Il Sessantotto ha prodotto anche il terrorismo'; on the other, he criticizes those who would simply identify 'il Sessantotto col terrorismo' and makes a parallel with the 'generazione dei padri':

un conto è dire che ci furono degli ex partigiani che nel Quarantacinque non riuscirono a smettere di sparare e si diedero alla rapina, e un conto è usare questi fatti per mettere sotto processo la guerra di liberazione.<sup>25</sup>

A similar position is adopted by Robert Lumley, who reflects on the ambiguous nature of the terrorism-movement connection and takes up the definition proposed by Alberto Melucci, for whom terrorism is 'paradoxically both the most radical result and the most radical antithesis of the new "class movements"'.<sup>26</sup>

It is important to remember that the Red Brigades were founded in 1970, within the wider protest movement and in the wake of the bombing in Piazza Fontana, Milan

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<sup>23</sup> Sidney Tarrow, *Democracy and Disorder: Protest and Politics in Italy 1965-1975*, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1989, p. 307.

<sup>24</sup> Donatella della Porta and Sidney Tarrow, 'Unwanted children: Political violence and the cycle of protest in Italy, 1966-1973', *European Journal of Political Research*, Vol. 14, 5-6 (1986), p. 607.

<sup>25</sup> Umberto Eco, 'Gli orfani del sessantotto', in *Sette anni di desiderio*, Milan: Bompiani, 1986, p. 11.

<sup>26</sup> Alberto Melucci, 'New movements, terrorism and the political system', *Socialist Review*, 56 (1981), p. 118, quoted in Lumley, *States of Emergency*, p. 260.

(12 December 1969), which gave the impetus to a militarized movement of the left and opened the cycle of violence, and that they remained 'within' the movement for a number of years. As Caselli and della Porta remind us, 'la storia della principale organizzazione terroristica italiana affonda le sue radici nel movimento degli studenti del 1968 e nell'autunno caldo del 1969'.<sup>27</sup> The nature of the BR only changed later, and piecemeal, as they moved from semi-legality to clandestinity:

l'evoluzione delle Br verso l'adozione di forme di azione più specificamente terroristiche (che oltrepassino la soglia – comune ad altri gruppi dell'estrema sinistra operanti in questo periodo – del generico impiego di tecniche violente) avviene in modo graduale. (...) Nella primavera del 1972 si ha la prima azione rivolta contro persone, il sequestro Macchiarini (...).<sup>28</sup>

Clandestinity and violence directed against individual representatives of the 'imperialist power' marked the move to a second phase, with the creation of 'a new generation of extremists who found the extraparlimentary groups too moderate for their tastes'.<sup>29</sup>

The violence targeted against prominent individuals which led to the killing of the President of the Christian Democrats was different in kind from that of the wider extraparlimentary movement: the latter never identified violence as the only possible means of struggle, nor did they prescribe its systematic use. They saw mass violence not as negative but as the sometimes necessary expression of oppressed groups in a situation of harsh class conflict, which could explode in demonstrations – street

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<sup>27</sup> Gian Carlo Caselli and Donatella della Porta, 'La storia delle Brigate rosse: strutture organizzative e strategie d'azione', in Donatella della Porta (ed.), *Terrorismi in Italia*, Bologna: Il Mulino, 1984, p. 156.

<sup>28</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 166.

<sup>29</sup> Tarrow, *Democracy and Disorder*, pp. 304.



violence – or for instance when the police tried to evict squatters from an occupied house.<sup>30</sup>

In this thesis I am principally concerned to analyse the representations of the violence of the so-called armed groups, as well as its causes and effects. The central characters are militants of these groups in clandestinity or their supporters or sympathisers. In the last chapter I analyse a number of recent texts about and by former militants from diverse experience in exile in France in which the years of violence as a whole are reassessed in retrospect, often in a personal perspective. This fact also reveals the impossibility of a group autobiography on the part of the activists of those years.

Clearly, in writing about the events and representations of this period it is difficult not to use terms such as ‘political violence’, ‘terrorism’ (with or without the qualifiers ‘left’ and ‘right’), or the designation ‘*anni di piombo*’, which has by now entered into widespread use, not to mention more specific expressions used by the groups themselves, such as ‘armed struggle’. These words are in any case an important part of the ‘shared cultural codes’, to use Stuart Hall’s phrase again, the common discourse of and about this period, part of the work of representation itself which is the subject of this study. In using the terms in the thesis, therefore, as I shall do, I shall be drawing on this shared discourse, but this does not mean I necessarily agree with a particular definition of these terms.

### **‘Left’ and ‘right’ violence**

I have chosen to concentrate this thesis on ‘red’ political violence and to exclude that of the right: so-called ‘black’ or fascist terrorism. This is partly for practical reasons of space and focus – I needed to limit my study – but also because of the different

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<sup>30</sup> Malcolm Anderson, ‘Georges Sorel: Reflections on Violence’, *Terrorism and Political Violence*, Vol. 1, No. 1, January 1989, pp. 70-78.

character of right terrorism.<sup>31</sup> The latter, however, may be said to have had equal historical importance in late twentieth-century Italy and it was responsible for a greater number of deaths and injuries than that of the left in the long cycle of *stragismo* that went from Piazza Fontana to Bologna station (2 August 1980). From the figures in della Porta and Rossi's study, cited above, one may calculate that nearly 56% of the incidents, 60% of the deaths and 75% of the injuries in terrorist incidents between 1969 and 1982 were attributable to the right.<sup>32</sup>

Right and left violence were in fact closely intertwined and interdependent. It was the massacre in Piazza Fontana, and the subsequent events (including the arrest of Giuseppe Pinelli, his suspicious death in police custody, and the arrest and long imprisonment of Pietro Valpreda), which led thousands of militants of the left to sympathize with or take a direct part in the 'armed struggle'. The nature of the so-called *strategia della tensione* was precisely to connect the two kinds of violence together, using (as in the case of Piazza Fontana) terror from the right, supported or manipulated by covert elements in the Italian state and international organizations such as NATO, in an attempt to discredit the left and create a spiral of violence that would then legitimate a conservative or authoritarian reaction. In addition, much of the political violence of the 1970s was directed across the right-left divide, with murders of fascists and 'comrades', beatings, petrol-bomb attacks.

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<sup>31</sup> In an early phase of the research I did in fact examine a number of representations of right terrorism and identified several themes and motifs which they had in common and which distinguished them from the representations of the armed struggle of the left. A very visible difference is that many of the texts address right terrorism through attention to its victims rather than its perpetrators. See, for example, Elena Stancanelli, 'Hanno arrestato i Tuti con la Tuta della Teti sopra il Tetto della Total', in Nicola Lagioia and Christian Raimo (eds), *La qualità dell'aria*, Rome: Minimum Fax, 2004; Robert Hellenga, *The Fall of a Sparrow: A Novel*, London: Viking, 1998; Andrea Zanzotto, 'Il nome di Maria Fresu', in *Idioma*, Milan: Mondadori, 1986, as well as the films *Per non dimenticare* (Massimo Martelli, Italy, 1992) and *Bologna centrale* (Vincent Dieutre, France, 2003).

<sup>32</sup> Della Porta, 'Il terrorismo', p. 535.

If, for these reasons, it seems difficult to talk about one kind of violence without talking about the other, I would maintain nonetheless that they were, at least in certain respects, different in character and aim. The violence carried out, for the most part during the 1970s, by groups associated with the political left was linked, albeit not always directly, to the ideology of revolutionary Marxism, and it traced its descent from Lenin's theories of the vanguard party and from the use of arms by various historic socialist and communist organizations such as the Communards in defence of the revolution in Paris in 1871 and the Spartakusbund in Germany after the First World War. There was also an important domestic ideological antecedent in the Italian Resistance, particularly those leftist elements within it that supported a social revolution. In their espousal of this ideological perspective, groups such as the Red Brigades were continuing the tradition of the left elements of the workers' and student movements of 1967-70, without, as I have emphasised, being a simple 'product' of these movements. Rather, they represented a part of the left which chose to continue the political struggle by means of the 'armed party'.

This specific leftist ideology and identity distinguishes armed groups such as the Red Brigades from those of the right. Although some right terrorists, like Valerio Fioravanti and Francesca Mambro, or even Vincenzo Vinciguerra, may be said to have had some similarities with those of the left in their personal trajectories as individual, clandestine militants, for the most part right terrorism had different ideological antecedents: in figures such as Mussolini, George Sorel, Julius Evola, René Guénon and Corneliu Codreanu, in historical Fascism and the Republic of Salò, and in the cult of the 'beautiful death'.<sup>33</sup> In a perceptive essay on the centrality of this cult in fascist ideology, in which he distinguished it from the left's cult of martyrs, Umberto Eco wrote that

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<sup>33</sup> Rosario Minna, 'Il terrorismo di destra', in della Porta (ed.), *Terrorismi in Italia*, p. 40.

death was considered ‘anziché una necessità che arriva da sola, e per la quale bisogna vivere, (...) una pratica di purificazione da produrre in anticipo sulla natura’.<sup>34</sup>

This different ideology, which emphasises action and the vision of the aristocratic life,<sup>35</sup> was reflected also in a different structure and a different conception of the group, which for the right was a “comunità di camerati”, una famiglia mitica, composta di “uomini eletti”, selezionati e accomunati dall’aver compiuto atti violenti’.<sup>36</sup> Ferdinando Camon’s novel *Occidente* represents this aspect of the right group, which differs completely from the group dynamics shown in texts about the armed groups of the left – not only those about the captivity of Moro but also, for example, in a work such as Nanni Balestrini’s *Gli invisibili*.<sup>37</sup> Moreover, the presence of women in the ‘gruppo dei camerati’ was decidedly limited in comparison with the women in the armed groups of the left. An estimated 25% of militants of the extreme left were women, compared with just 7% of militants of the extreme right.<sup>38</sup> Among the essential features of the right group one must also mention il ‘versante magico esoterico’.<sup>39</sup>

Moreover, some, at least, of the terrorists of the right followed very different trajectories from those identified with the left, both towards the end of the *anni di piombo* and subsequently, and some of them have a very different attitude towards their own past actions. Many former militants of the left armed groups, if they did not dissociate themselves from the armed movement, at least expressed misgivings about it, or at any rate reflected subsequently on its ultimate defeat and failure and critically

<sup>34</sup> Umberto Eco, ‘La voglia di morte’, *Sette anni di desiderio*, Milano: Bompiani, 1986, p. 125. For the fascist cult of death see also Carlo Mazzantini, *A cercar la bella morte*, Venice: Marsilio, 1995.

<sup>35</sup> Franco Ferraresi, ‘La destra eversiva’, in della Porta, *Terrorismi in Italia*, p. 253.

<sup>36</sup> Maurizio Fiasco, ‘La simbiosi ambigua. Il neofascismo, i movimenti e la strategia delle stragi’, in Raimondo Catanzaro (ed.), *Ideologie, movimenti, terrorismi*, Bologna: Il Mulino, p. 158.

<sup>37</sup> Ferdinando Camon, *Occidente*, Milan: Garzanti, 1975; Nanni Balestrini, *Gli invisibili*, Milan: Bompiani, 1987.

<sup>38</sup> See Donatella della Porta, ‘Specificità delle donne e violenza politica’, *Rivista di Storia Contemporanea*, No. 1, 1989, p. 118; Leonard Weinberg and William Lee Eubank, *The Rise and the Fall of Italian Terrorism*, Boulder and London: Westview Press, 1987, pp. 83-85.

<sup>39</sup> Rosario Minna, ‘Il terrorismo di destra’, in della Porta (ed.), *Terrorismi in Italia*, p. 40.

reassessed the expediency and morality of their own actions. By contrast, although there have been some fascist *pentiti*, many of those involved in acts of violence of the right, as Anna Cento Bull has recently demonstrated in an unpublished paper, in which she examines in particular the accounts of Vinciguerra and of Stefano delle Chiaie, founder of Avanguardia Nazionale, tend to produce very different kinds of memory narrative, characterized by intransigence (non-penitence), anger that they were manipulated by the state and strenuous denials of their responsibility for the massacres.<sup>40</sup> In other cases, as Maurizio Fiasco has noted, a perception of themselves emerges from their self-narratives as ‘eroi sconfitti, con un percorso di autovittimizzazione che incontra, coronandovisi, uno stereotipato richiamo storico: la sconfitta del fascismo e del nazismo, intesa come mito e come eredità che viene consegnata alle nuove generazioni neofasciste’.<sup>41</sup>

Given these differences in the nature of the armed groups of left and right and the differences in theme and motif in the representations dealing with them, it has not seemed to me either possible or desirable to deal with both together in the same work. It is for these reasons, then, as well as that of space, that I have chosen to concentrate the thesis on the motives and themes found in fictional and semi-fictional representations of ‘red’ political violence, on their recurrent patterns and on their omissions as well as their inclusions.

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<sup>40</sup> Anna Cento Bull, ‘Casting a long shadow: the legacy of *stragismo* for the Italian extreme right’, unpublished article, cited with the author’s permission. Forthcoming in *The Italianist*, 25, 2005. This was originally a paper given at the conference ‘La violenza illustrata: The Rhetoric and Representation of Political Violence in Italy from 1968 to the Present Date’, Cambridge, Centre for Research in the Arts, Social Sciences, and Humanities (CRASSH), 19-20 November 2004.

<sup>41</sup> Fiasco, ‘La simbiosi ambigua’, p. 159.

## Fiction and non-fiction

To return to the particular representations I discuss in the thesis, although most of them would conventionally be described as fictional, I also examine some that are non-fictional, notably Sciascia's *L'affaire Moro* (Chapter One) and the documentary films about Italian political refugees in Paris (Chapter Four). It is rarely easy, however, to draw a neat line between fiction and non-fiction in the corpus of texts I examine and it may be more useful to think of them as lying along a continuum between fiction and non-fiction, with 'pure' fiction at one pole, 'pure' non-fiction at the other (these two poles are themselves hypothetical constructs), and many hybrids and crossovers in between.<sup>42</sup> All the texts I discuss fall somewhere between the two poles. Some of them – for instance *Caro Michele* or *Ombre*, discussed in Chapter Two – are ostensibly fictional in that the characters and events in them are not based on real ones, and yet their respective 'story worlds' make direct allusions to real events in Italian history, not just the activities of armed groups in the 1970s but also, for instance, the Resistance. Other texts, such as the films and plays about the abduction of Aldo Moro which I examine in Chapter One, are evidently representations of a real event which use actors to play real people, yet many of the words spoken by these actors and some of the events in the stories are invented by the dramatists or screenwriters. The novels of Cesare Battisti and the play *Le ragioni dell'altro* by Roberto Silvi and Cecilia Calvi, discussed in Chapter Four, are also hybrid works, in that the authors recount events and experiences that have happened to them but at the same time they elaborate and

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<sup>42</sup> For the notion of continuum see the statement by Clifford Geertz: 'The properties connecting texts with one another, that put them, ontologically anyway, on the same level, are coming to seem as important in characterizing them as those dividing them; and rather than face an array of natural kinds, fixed types divided by sharp qualitative differences, we more and more see ourselves surrounded by a vast, almost continuous field of variously intended and diversely constructed works we can order only practically, relationally, and as our purposes prompt us.' 'Blurred Genres: The Refiguration of Social Thought', in *Local Knowledge: Further Essays in Interpretive Anthropology*, New York: Basic Books, 1983, pp. 20-21.

‘fictionalize’ these and mix them with invented characters and situations to produce what I describe as ‘indirect self narratives’, but which one might also categorize as ‘autofictions’.<sup>43</sup> At the other end of the continuum are the documentaries about the political exiles, also discussed in Chapter Four, in which there is no overt fictionalization and in which real people, exiles in Paris, talk to camera about their experiences. Yet in these texts too, as I show, the exiles use, probably unconsciously, various strategies of ‘self-narrative’ in which they reshape their past experience according to various ends, for instance in order to demonstrate, in the majority of the cases, how they have become ‘normal’ or, conversely, how they have remained consistent with their former selves.

In the analysis of these texts I have made use of theoretical work on self-narrative, notably that of Kenneth Gergen and Mark Freeman cited in Chapter Four. I have also been influenced by various discussions of historical writing and of other kinds of non-literary writing which emphasise how they share certain important properties with literary works. Paul Ricoeur has maintained that ‘historical events do not differ radically from the events framed by a plot’.<sup>44</sup> Hayden White has stressed that historical narratives require to be laid out in the form of a plot, and that their ‘emplotment’ imposes on the historical text structures similar to those found in a literary text.<sup>45</sup> The work of the New Historicist critics has likewise drawn attention to the overlap between history and fiction. As Louis Montrose has put it:

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<sup>43</sup> See Frank Zippel, ‘Autofiction’, in David Herman, Manfred Jahn and Marie-Laure Ryan (eds), *The Routledge Encyclopedia of Narrative Theory*, London and New York: Routledge, 2005, p. 36, 37: ‘Autofiction is a homodiegetic narrative that declares itself to be fiction (...) but actually relates events of the author’s own life and identifies the author in the text by his or her real name’. In Cesare Battisti’s novels, the main character does not always bear the name Battisti, but often the elision of the name seems to confirm the author’s identity. The concept has been applied by, among others, Alex Hughes in her article ‘Recycling and Repetition in Recent French Autofiction: Marc Weitzmann’s Dostoevskian Borrowings’, *Modern Language Review*, Vol. 97, No. 3, 2002, pp. 566-76.

<sup>44</sup> Paul Ricoeur, *Time and Narrative*, Volume 1, Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1984, p. 208.

<sup>45</sup> Hayden White, *The Content of the Form: Narrative Discourse and Cultural Representation*, Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1987.

The post-structuralistic orientation to history now emerging in literary studies may be characterized chiasmically, as reciprocal concern with the historicity of texts and the textuality of history. By the *historicity of texts*, I mean to suggest the cultural specificity, the social embedment, of all modes of writing – not only the texts that critics study but also the texts in which we study them. By the *textuality of history*, I mean to suggest, firstly, that we can have no access to a full and authentic past, a lived material existence, unmediated by the surviving textual traces of the society in question (...) and secondly, that those textual traces are themselves subject to subsequent textual mediations when they are constructed as ‘documents’ upon which historians ground their own texts, called ‘histories’.<sup>46</sup>

Just as Ricoeur, Hayden White and the New Historicists have emphasised the common textual and discursive nature of literary and historical narratives, much recent work in film studies has emphasised the overlap between fiction films and documentaries. Bill Nichols, for example, in a book significantly entitled *Blurred Boundaries*, argues that the boundaries and categories ‘surrounding documentary and reality, fact and fiction, defy hard and fast definition’ and lack a ‘static identity’.<sup>47</sup> However, to argue for common ground between fiction and non-fiction is not to claim that the two are identical or that the presence or absence of reference to the real world is irrelevant in distinguishing between different types of representation. Such a position (sometimes known as the thesis of ‘panfictionality’), which I do not accept, has been adopted by advocates of an extreme form of poststructuralism.<sup>48</sup> Jean Baudrillard has written, for instance: ‘Today, the entire system is fluctuating in indeterminacy, all of reality absorbed by the hyperreality of the code and of the simulation, and not of reality,

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<sup>46</sup> Louis A. Montrose, ‘Professing the Renaissance: The Poetics and Politics of Culture’, in H. Aram Veesser (ed.), *The New Historicism*, London: Routledge, 1989, p. 20.

<sup>47</sup> Bill Nichols, *Blurred Boundaries: Questions of Meaning in Contemporary Culture*, Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1994, p. xiii. Nichols argued a similar position in his already cited *Representing Reality* of 1991. See also Stella Bruzzi, *New Documentary: A Critical Introduction*, London: Routledge, 2000.

<sup>48</sup> See Marie Laurie Ryan, ‘Postmodernism and the Doctrine of Panfictionality’, in *Narrative*, Vol. 5, No. 2, 1997, pp. 165 - 187.



that regulates social life. (...) there are only simulacra' and 'Representation starts from the principle that the sign and the real are equivalent'.<sup>49</sup>

Linguistic philosophers have tended by contrast to examine the differences, and not only the overlap, between fictional and non-fictional texts. John Searle, developing his theory of 'illocutionary acts', that is to say speech acts governed by 'vertical rules' which link them to actions and events in the real world (for example a promise, and the action promised), has argued that fictional texts are characterized precisely by their lack of such connections and the presence instead of 'horizontal' conventions operating within the text itself.

Now what makes fiction possible, I suggest, is a set of extralinguistic, nonsemantic conventions that break the connection between words and the world established by the rules mentioned earlier. Think of the convention of fictional discourse as a set of horizontal conventions that break the connections established by the vertical rules. They suspend the normal requirements established by these rules. Such horizontal conventions are not meaning rules; they are not part of the speaker's semantic competence. (...) What they do rather is to enable the speaker to use words with their literal meanings without undertaking the commitments that are normally required by those meanings.<sup>50</sup>

An example of these horizontal conventions in fiction which 'suspend the normal requirements' of the non-fictional language world is that of fantasy sequences in films, such as that at the end of *Buongiorno, notte*, discussed in Chapter One, in which Aldo Moro, played by Roberto Herlitzka, walks free down a road in the EUR suburb of Rome. The fantasy sequence shows something that is historically untrue and in the very

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<sup>49</sup> Jean Baudrillard, 'Symbolic Exchange and Death', in *Selected Writings*, ed. Mark Poster, Cambridge: Polity Press, 1988, pp. 120, 170.

<sup>50</sup> John R. Searle, *Expression and Meaning: Studies in the Theory of Speech Acts*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1979, pp. 66, 67. See also David Lewis, 'Truth in Fiction', *Philosophical Papers*, Vol. I, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1983.

act of doing so confirms that we are in the realm of fiction, in a text which does not obey the same commitment to telling the truth as if it were a historian's account.

Although I acknowledge, with Searle, this difference in ontological status, as well as in the reader's or spectator's expectations, between non-fiction and fiction, I have chosen to analyse the two kinds of texts side by side in this thesis, without making a sharp distinction between them, on the grounds that both are representations which, in the act either of engaging with the real world or constructing a fictional story world, construct a particular 'reality' or a particular account of 'reality'. At the same time, I have made the decision to pay more attention in the thesis as a whole to 'fictional' texts than to 'non-fictional' ones. There are numerous texts of the latter type dealing with the armed groups which I do not discuss or analyse directly, from memoirs of former political activists (other than those in exile) to historical and sociological studies to journalistic treatments.<sup>51</sup> If I have chosen to focus more on fictional representations than on non-fictional ones it is not because I believe the former possess an intrinsic cognitive or heuristic superiority, for instance by providing a better understanding of the minds of

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<sup>51</sup> I mention the memoirs in Chapter Four, footnote 3. Among the historical and journalistic texts, it is worth mentioning the following, in addition to those I shall cite in the thesis: Soccorso Rosso, *Le B.R., che cosa hanno fatto, che cosa hanno detto, che cosa se n'è detto*, Turin: Einaudi, 1976; Vincenzo Tessandori, *BR. Imputazione: banda armata. Cronaca e documenti delle Brigate rosse*, Milan: Garzanti, 1977; Giorgio Manzini, *Indagine su un brigatista rosso. La storia di Walter Alasia*, Turin: Einaudi 1978; Giampaolo Pansa, *Storie italiane di violenza e terrorismo*, Rome-Bari: Laterza, 1980; Giorgio Bocca, *Il caso 7 Aprile: Toni Negri e la grande inquisizione*, Milan: Feltrinelli, 1980; Giorgio Bocca, *Dal '68 al terrorismo*, Milan: Rizzoli, 1982; Luigi Manconi and Vittorio Dini, *Il discorso delle armi. L'ideologia terroristica nel linguaggio delle Brigate rosse e di Prima Linea*, Rome: Savelli, 1981; Mauro Galleni (ed.), *Rapporto sul terrorismo*, Milan: Rizzoli, 1981; Giorgio Bocca, *Terrorismo e caso Moro*, Milan: Bompiani, 1983; Giorgio Galli, *L'Italia sotterranea: storia, politica, scandali*, Rome and Bari: Laterza, 1983; Gianfranco Pasquino (ed.), *La prova delle armi*, Bologna: Il Mulino, 1984; Giorgio Bocca, *Noi terroristi: 12 anni di lotta armata*, Milan: Garzanti, 1985; Sergio Zavoli (ed.), *La notte della Repubblica*, Rome: Nuova Eri, 1992; Guido Petter, *I giorni dell'ombra. Diario di una stagione della violenza italiana*, Milan: Garzanti, 1993; Raimondo Catanzaro (ed.), *La politica della violenza*, Bologna: Il Mulino, 1990; Renato Curcio, Stefano Petrelli and Nicola Valentino, *Nel Bosco di Bistorco*, Rome: Coop. Sensibili alle foglie, 1990; Progetto Memoria, *La mappa perduta*, Rome: Coop. Sensibili alle foglie, 1994; Progetto Memoria, *Sguardi Ritrovati*, Rome: Coop. Sensibili alle foglie, 1995; Progetto Memoria, *Le parole scritte*, Rome: Coop. Sensibili alle foglie, 1996; Progetto Memoria, *Le torture affiorate*, Rome: Coop. Sensibili alle foglie, 1998; Giorgio Guidelli, Giovanni Fasanella and Giovanni Pellegrino, *La guerra civile*, Milan: Rizzoli 2005.

those involved in the armed struggle. In this respect I differ from Walter Laqueur who has claimed that

fiction holds more promise for the understanding of the terrorist phenomenon than political science but some words of caution are nevertheless required. (...) Fiction cannot offer a master key to the soul of the terrorist, the most one can hope for is to detect common patterns in the character and mental make-up of the *dramatis personae* who acted as a group at a certain time and place. To accomplish even this modest task a great deal of empathy, psychological understanding and creative mastery is needed. Once this has been accepted a great deal can be learned about terrorism from contemporary fiction, provided these books, plays and films are not regarded as manuals for the study of terrorism, aspiring to photographic exactitude and universal applicability.<sup>52</sup>

Unlike Laqueur, I believe that fictional representations, at any rate those dealing with the Italian case, may actually contain serious shortcomings for an adequate understanding of terrorism. My own position is closer to that of Bili Melman, who argues that 'fiction is not preoccupied with terrorism as a concrete, historical phenomenon' and therefore that 'a useful study of terrorism in fiction should concentrate on the terrorist as he is perceived by the writer, rather than on the terrorist as he was, or might have been in reality'.<sup>53</sup> Indeed, the first of the two reasons behind my choice to focus the thesis mainly on the fictional representations is that I am interested precisely in their tendency to construct their stories around a *limited* number

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<sup>52</sup> Walter Laqueur, 'Interpretations of Terrorism: Fact, Fiction and Political Sciences', *Journal of Contemporary History*, Vol. 12, No. 1, 1977, pp. 15, 38. Despite my reservations about Laqueur's article I have found it useful to consult it, as well as other studies of fictional treatments of terrorism, notably Margaret Scanlan, *Plotting the Terror: Novelists and Terrorists in Contemporary Fiction*, Charlottesville and London: University Press of Virginia, 2001; Gerrit-Jan Berendse and Mark Williams (eds), *Terror and Text: Representing Political Violence in Literature and the Visual Arts*, Bielefeld: Aisthesis Verlag, 2002; Alex Houen, *Terrorism and Modern Literature: From Joseph Conrad to Ciaran Carson*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002; David Punter, 'The Terrorist's Story: The Reign of Terror and Later Terrorists in Literature', in C.C. Barfoot and Theo D'haen (eds), *Tropes of Revolution: Writers' Reactions to Real and Imagined Revolutions 1789-1989*, Amsterdam, Atlanta GA: Rodopi, 1991, pp. 365-378.

<sup>53</sup> Bili Melman, 'The Terrorist in Fiction', *Journal of Contemporary History*, Vol. 15, No. 3 July 1980, p. 560.

of character motives, and in particular in their emphasis on the personal and inner life (childhood, family relationships) of political activists at the expense of a representation of political activity, including armed struggle. The second reason is that I am concerned for the most part to analyse and understand the images and representations produced by people *external* to the activism, that is to say writers, screenwriters, dramatists and film directors who were not themselves directly involved in the armed struggle, rather than those produced by the protagonists themselves. The self-narratives of the exiles constitute a partial exception to this, but here too what interests me is precisely their *external* perspective, their reflection on past events from both a temporal and a geographical distance, that of exile, and, once again, the tendency not to speak in detail about the political activities themselves. In these respects they are different kinds of self-narratives from those produced by convicted former terrorists, whether still in prison or *pentiti*, living in Italy.

There has been very little written specifically on the subject of fictional and semi-fictional treatments of left political violence in Italy and there are, to date, no book-length studies of the subject.<sup>54</sup> Emmanuel Betta and Enrica Capussotti, in an important article, have noted that relatively little space has been dedicated to the years of violence even in historical accounts.<sup>55</sup> Similarly, studies of recent Italian literature have tended to devote little attention to these works and certainly not to group them together as a thematic category.<sup>56</sup>

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<sup>54</sup> Beverly Allen, 'They're Not Children Anymore: The Novelization of "Italians" and "Terrorism"', in Beverly Allen and Mary Russo (eds), *Revisioning Italy*, Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1997.

<sup>55</sup> Emmanuel Betta and Enrica Capussotti, '"Il buono, il brutto, il cattivo": l'epica dei movimenti tra storia e memoria', in *Genesis. Rivista della Società Italiana delle Storiche*, III/1, 2004, special issue on 'Anni Settanta', pp. 113-123.

<sup>56</sup> 'Non c'è un Romanzo del Sessantotto, e nemmeno del Settantasette. Solo alcune cose sparse, a volte pretestuose', Filippo La Porta, 'L'intelligenza possibile della narrativa', *Bollettino di Italianistica. Rivista di critica, storia letteraria, filologia e linguistica*, new series, Vol. I, No. 2, 2004, p. 117.

My work, therefore, in delimiting this particular field as its subject of analysis, makes an original contribution to the study of this period of Italian history and culture. I would claim that it is original also in the range of material I analyse and in some of the research methods I have applied to this material. In the first place, I have examined representations across different media – cinema, literature (and written texts more generally) and theatre – in other words a variety of types of *narrative* representation, that is to say representations unfolding as stories in time, on stage, screen and written text. I have made brief mention in passing of non-narrative representations – news photographs, paintings and other artworks – but the thesis does not deal in any depth with the latter.<sup>57</sup> In the second place, I have made use in the research of my own interviews with theatre and film directors (see under ‘List of sources’ at the end of the thesis) whose works I discuss. I carried out in all eleven interviews between 2000 and 2005, both in person (audio-recorded) and via e-mail.

The reflections in this last part of the Introduction on fiction and non-fiction lead me into Chapter One, which focuses on the representations of the Moro case: a real event, but one in which, already at the time, as we shall see, the boundaries between what was real and what was imagined, between actual and imputed motives, ‘truth’ and ‘literature’, became blurred, and which many textual representations would cast in the form of a tragic or partially tragic narrative. The representations of the Moro affair also contain many of the principal themes which will recur in other texts examined in the thesis as a whole.

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<sup>57</sup> On these types of representation see Marco Belpoliti, ‘Attraverso l’occhio’, *Ipsa Facto*, No. 1, May-August, 1998, pp. 143-148; ‘Attraverso l’occhio (2)’, *Ipsa Facto*, No. 2, January-April 1999, pp. 135, 140.

## Chapter One

### The Moro affair

*Coro*: 27 anni son passati.  
*Maria Fida Moro*: 27 Natali mancati.  
*Coro*: 9855 giorni.  
*Maria Fida Moro*: Di inguaribile dolore.  
*Coro*: 236 520 ore.  
*Maria Fida Moro*: 2 liete, le altre insopportabili.  
*Coro*: 14.191.200 minuti.  
*Maria Fida Moro*: Quali minuti? Scosse di terremoto.

(Antonio Maria Di Fresco and Maria Fida Moro, *L'ira del sole. Un 9 di maggio*, with computations updated to 9 May 2005)

#### 1.1 Introduction

The assassination of Aldo Moro has been seen as ‘il punto più alto della strategia brigatista contro lo Stato’,<sup>1</sup> the definitive action of the Red Brigades and, at the same time, the beginning of their disintegration. In spite of the ‘assenza di una idea di stato: assenza rassicurante e si potrebbe dire energetica’,<sup>2</sup> the abduction of Moro provided the pretext for an entire political class (with the exception of the Socialists) to form a coalition against the demands of the terrorists in the name of an abstract reason of state. Alberto Arbasino, in a rhetorical construction of Italian history, wondered whether it could be compared ‘come trauma nazionale all’assassinio di Umberto I o a quello di Matteotti, nella storia terrorista del nostro paese e nelle probabili conseguenze

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<sup>1</sup> Giovanni Fasanella and Claudio Sestieri with Giovanni Pellegrino, *Segreto di Stato. La verità da Gladio al Caso Moro*, Turin: Einaudi, 2000, p. iii.

<sup>2</sup> Leonardo Sciascia, *L'affaire Moro*, Milan: Aephi, 1994 (first edition, Palermo: Sellerio, 1978), p. 33.

politiche'.<sup>3</sup> According to others, exponents of the conspiracy theory, it was the result of

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complotto di destabilizzazione (...). Sulla natura del complotto si sono confrontate due 'dottrine': la prima, anche in ordine di tempo, che ha ipotizzato il 'ruolo consapevole e diretto' giocato dai movimenti sociali e in particolare dalla lotta armata, 'il partito armato', contro il PCI; la seconda che ha ipotizzato 'l'eterodirezione', la 'complicità inconsapevole', delle Brigate Rosse in particolare, come se esse fossero state nient'altro che delle pedine manovrate da potenze occulte.<sup>4</sup>

Various reasons may lie behind the recent renewal of interest in the Moro case in literature, film and theatre: the 25th anniversary in 2003; the capture, in January 2004, of the brigatisti Maurizio Falesse and Rita Algraniti (the latter was involved in the abduction and is married to Alessio Cassimiri, on the run in Nicaragua, also believed to have taken part); and, at the international level, the events of September 11th, 2001, which may have served to 'unblock' a certain resistance in Italy to confronting both the Moro case and the *anni di piombo* more generally. Indeed, the attacks against the US and the subsequent 'war on terror' launched by the Bush administration have not only refocused and sharpened the preoccupation with the problem of terrorism and political violence; they have also revived the interest of the film and publishing industries in this theme, which has been immediately seized on by the Americans: 'si les écrivains américains ont presque immédiatement intégré la catastrophe du 11-Septembre dans des récits de fiction, les années du terrorisme étaient restées un sujet tabou pour la littérature italienne'.<sup>5</sup> Moreover, the recent abduction of Italian citizens in Iraq has probably acted as a stimulant to memory: the video clip has replaced the photograph of Moro with a

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<sup>3</sup> Alberto Arbasino, *In questo Stato*, Milan: Garzanti, 1978, p. 9.

<sup>4</sup> Paolo Persichetti and Oreste Scalzone, *Il nemico inconfessabile*, Rome: Odradek, 1999, p. 7.

<sup>5</sup> Fabio Gambaro, 'Retours sur les années de plomb', *Le Monde*, 24 June 2005.

newspaper in his hand. That of Giuliana Sgrena was shown just a few hours before the Senate was due to vote on the refinancing of troops in Iraq. The state voted to continue to guarantee security abroad, maintaining a show of strength in confronting the terrorists, but fortunately this episode had a different outcome from that of Moro: the Italian journalist was freed. In *il manifesto*, the paper for which Sgrena worked, Rossana Rossanda reflected: 'Dai terroristi lo Stato deve proteggerti e se non ci riesce deve riscattarti. Lo pensava Moro, lo penso anch'io'.<sup>6</sup>

Gianluca Floris, author and co-director of *Lato destro*, one of the texts I shall analyse in this chapter, claims that those who are now in their early forties, and who were in their late teens when Moro was abducted and killed, cannot help but remember what happened because of the media coverage at the time, which presented the story as terrible but also as 'filmica, teatrale', in other words as highly 'viewable'. This statement brings to mind Sciascia's words: 'Tanta perfezione può essere dell'immaginazione, della fantasia; non della realtà'.<sup>7</sup> Furthermore, Floris maintains that the lack of clarity over the case and the different interpretations that were put forward have allowed many of those who were young at the time to draw their own conclusions about it more or less freely.

One could suggest that, similarly to what happened in postwar Germany, where the youth who had grown up under the Third Reich gave birth to so-called *Vaterliteratur* to 'mourn the wounds inflicted on the psyche of the author by the fact of

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<sup>6</sup> Rossana Rossanda, 'Andarsene è giusto', *Il manifesto*, 18 February 2005. Compare the words of Moro in his letter to Francesco Cossiga, published in the Italian press on 30 March 1978, quoted by Sciascia, 'Il sacrificio degli innocenti in nome di un astratto principio di legalità, mentre un indiscutibile stato di necessità dovrebbe indurli a salvarli, è inammissibile', and Sciascia's comment: 'Moro pensava che lo scambio fosse da accettare "realisticamente", cioè per quella forza che ha la realtà di rendere possibili e lecite le cose che astrattamente non sono possibili e non sono lecite', *L'affaire Moro*, pp. 42, 51. The full text of Moro's letter is now in Aldo Moro, *Ultimi scritti, 16 marzo-9 maggio 1978*, ed. Eugenio Tassini, Casale Monferrato: Piemme, 1998, pp. 12-14 (passage quoted, p. 14).

<sup>7</sup> Sciascia, *L'affaire Moro*, p. 29.



the father's defeated condition and by their emotional response to that defeat',<sup>8</sup> so now in Italy both the contemporaries and the younger siblings of those who made the choice of armed struggle have decided to contextualize their own lives in relation to that period, 'set the record straight' on the Moro affair and hand it down to the next generation. As Marco Baliani, author of *Corpo di Stato, Il delitto Moro: una generazione divisa*, another text I shall discuss, has said, 'se a noi quarantenni i nostri padri non sono riusciti a raccontare nulla, facciamolo coi nostri figli'.<sup>9</sup> In this respect some representations of the Moro case may be seen as narrations by a younger generation of lived emotional experience, means to 'give expression to a general sense of cultural bereavement'.<sup>10</sup>

Moreover, almost thirty years after the event, the staging of the Moro affair in these cultural representations provides the opportunity for the different groups – the Red Brigades, the politicians, the Moro family and the Italian media audience – to be represented and for deep conflicts to be reenacted.<sup>11</sup> In the texts I shall examine, Moro is symbolically both the father whose children rebel and the victim of 'bad fathers' (the representatives of the state).<sup>12</sup> Finally, the Moro affair still represents today a perfect example of a media event because of the way certain images have become part of the collective cultural legacy. I am thinking of three images in particular: the photograph of Moro against the flag of the Red Brigades, found with communiqué no.1 (Fig. 1), that

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<sup>8</sup> Paul Connerton, 'Histories and Mourning', unpublished article, March 2005, p. 15; quoted with the author's permission.

<sup>9</sup> Claudia Provvedini, 'Teatro e Tv: riecco i monologhi. È l'ora dei raccontatori. Paolini: sconfitta l'ansia dell'attualità. Bene: oltre le falsificazioni', *Corriere della Sera*, 13 May 1998.

<sup>10</sup> Connerton, 'Histories and Mourning', p. 15.

<sup>11</sup> Both Maria Fida Moro and Valerio Morucci told me during my interviews with them (3<sup>rd</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> of May 2005) that they did not recognize themselves at all in the films that depict them.

<sup>12</sup> For a discussion of the recent crisis in the role of the father see Luigi Zoja, *The Father: Historical, Psychological and Cultural Perspectives*, Hove: Brunner-Routledge, 2001 (first edition: *Il gesto di Ettore: preistoria, storia, attualità e scomparsa del padre*, Turin: Bollati Boringhieri, 2000).

of Moro with the newspaper in his hand, attached to communiqué no.7 (Fig. 2), and that of his dead body in the boot of the Renault 4 (Fig.3).<sup>13</sup>



Fig. 1. Aldo Moro in front of BR flag, 1978. Polaroid photo, *L'Espresso* archive. Reproduced in Uliano Lucas (ed.), *L'immagine fotografica, 1945-2000 (Storia d'Italia, Annali, 20)*, Turin: Einaudi, 2004 (picture no. 427).

Fig. 2. Aldo Moro holding copy of *La Repubblica*. Reproduced in Alberto Franceschini, *Mara, Renato e io. Storia delle Brigate Rosse*, Milan: Mondadori, 1988, between pages 114 and 115.

Marco Belpoliti has defined these images as 'postmodern icons' and has made an interesting analysis of works by contemporary Italian artists – Maurizio Cattelan, Luca Pancrazi, and Marco Cingolani (Fig. 4) – inspired by them.<sup>14</sup> In *Romanzo criminale* by Giancarlo De Cataldo the repetition of Moro's face is assimilated to sacred iconography:

<sup>13</sup> The body, in its most important organ, is also present in the Red Brigades' slogan 'colpire il cuore dello stato'.

<sup>14</sup> Marco Belpoliti, 'Attraverso l'occhio (2)', *Ipsa Facto*, 2, January-April 1999, pp. 135-40.

Maggio si era abbattuto su Roma con tutta la violenza della sua incandescente primavera. Ma era uno strano maggio. Triste. In una città sospesa in un'angoscia insonorizzata, come sotto una nevicata di polistirolo. In una città finita sotto una di quelle teche di vetro dove i vecchi tengono l'immagine della Madonna. O di un Cristo con il cuore sanguinante e la faccia di Aldo Moro. Scialoja sognava Aldo Moro. Milioni di italiani sognavano Aldo Moro. I colleghi sognavano Aldo Moro.<sup>15</sup>

In the photographs depicting Moro's face in what the Red Brigades called the Prigione del Popolo one can perceive that ambiguity of the act of photography discussed by Roland Barthes – the photograph is a trace of life which, at the very moment it is taken, has already passed, it is dead – and, because of this, it acquires the value of a premonition.<sup>16</sup> The photographs that portray Moro alive are therefore 'un enigme fascinante et funèbre', a testimony 'de ce qui n'est plus. (...) Chaque acte de lecture d'une photo, (...), chaque acte de capture et de lecture d'une photo est implicitement, d'une façon refoulée, un contact avec ce qui n'est plus, c'est à dire avec la mort'.<sup>17</sup> The photographic image is a 'souvenir d'arret, de figement, d'échappement au monde qui continue'. But, at the same time, is it not also a means of momentary resurrection?<sup>18</sup>

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<sup>15</sup> Giancarlo De Cataldo, *Romanzo criminale*, Turin: Einaudi, 2004, p. 100.

<sup>16</sup> 'Tous ces jeune photographes qui s'agitent dans le monde, se vouant à la capture de l'actualité, ne savent pas qu'ils sont des agents de la Mort. C'est la façon dont notre temps assume la Mort: sous l'alibi dénégateur de l'éperdument vivant, dont le Photographe est en quelque sort le professionnel.' Roland Barthes, *La Chambre claire* (1980), in *Œuvres complètes*, ed. Éric Marty, Vol. III, 1974-1980, Paris, Seuil, 1995, p. 1173; English translation in *Camera Lucida. Reflections on Photography*, London, Flamingo, 1984, p. 92.

<sup>17</sup> Roland Barthes, 'Sur la Photographie', in *Œuvres complètes*, Vol. III, p. 1237.

<sup>18</sup> Philippe Dubois, *L'acte photographique*, Brussels: Editions Labor, 1983, p. 156.

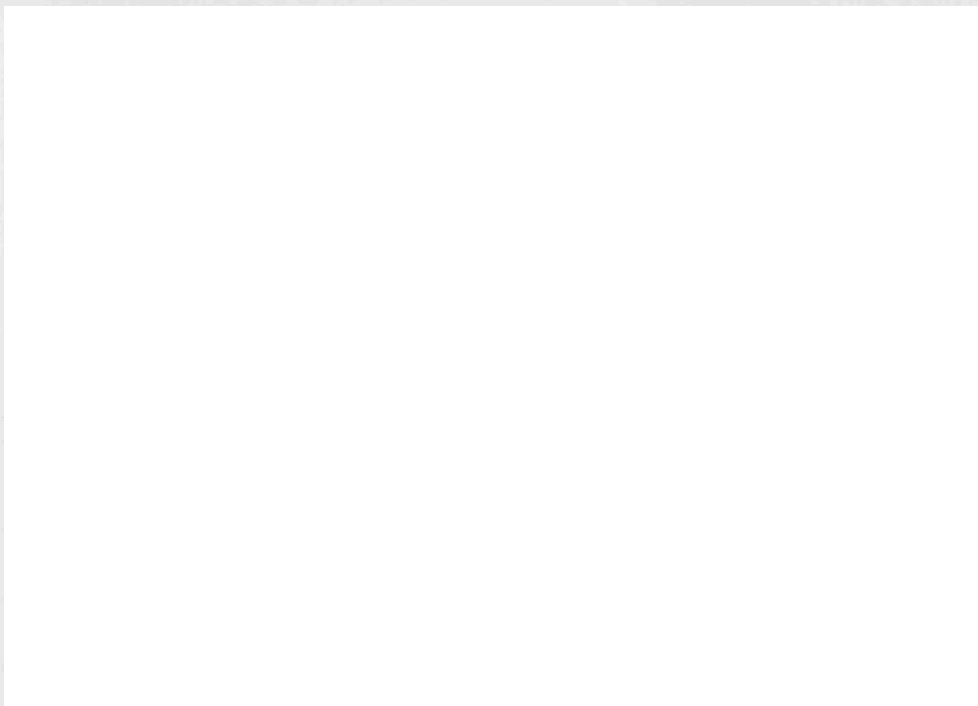


Fig. 3. Discovery of Aldo Moro's body in Via Caetani, Rome, 9 May 1978. Photograph by Rolando Fava/Ansa, Archivio Ansa, Rome. Reproduced in Lucas, *L'immagine fotografica* (picture no. 186).

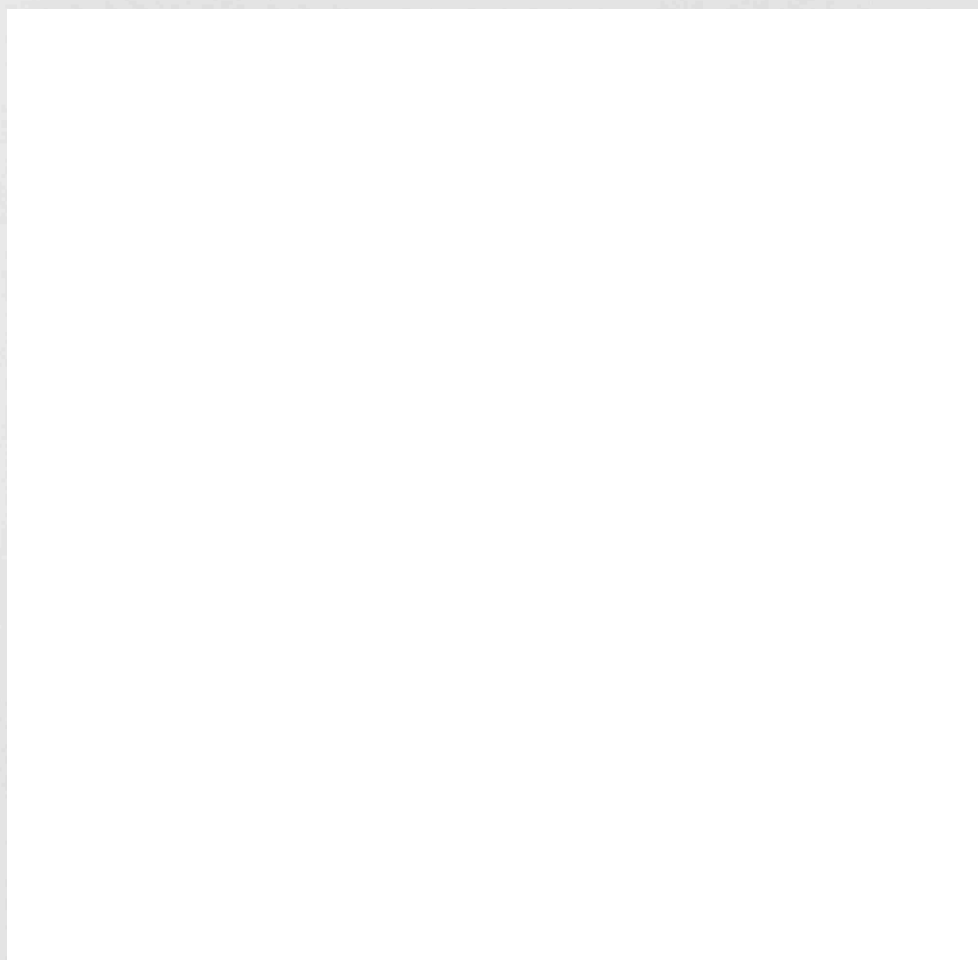


Fig. 4. Marco Cingolani, 'Il ritrovamento del corpo di Aldo Moro' (1989), coloured chalk on canvas, 185 x 185 cm, Museo d'Arte di Nuoro.

‘Non ne posso più di vedere il corpo di mio padre nel baule della Renault’.<sup>19</sup> The words of Maria Fida Moro confirm that that particular picture, more than the others, continues to reappear or be cited in texts of various kinds.

Giampaolo Spinato’s description in *Amici e nemici* of the body discovered in the Renault could almost be a comment on Cingolani’s painting:

Giornalisti, funzionari, agenti. Tutti la videro, mentre l’obiettivo si stringeva sopra l’uomo grigio che si avvicinò al lunotto e, oltre quel vetro, fotografò la traccia, la prima sagoma, forse soltanto immaginata, ancora. (...) la bara non comune, anomala, targata, presidiata.

Era così, come l’avevano lasciato. Una coperta nera stretta in mano.

Un lembo sanguinante che gli copriva e gli scopriva il volto a ogni ritorno, tutte le volte che si apriva lo sportello e una grandine di scatti, di zoom rubati, alzandosi sopra le spalle dei privilegiati che venivano ad accertarsi che davvero fosse lui, spargeva intorno, sulle teste, la mitraglia silenziosa e assordante di un ronzio.

Era disteso, il collo torto.

Le gambe rannicchiate in uno spazio angusto.(...) L’espressione che nelle foto, soprattutto negli scatti pubblicati sui giornali durante il rapimento, avevano imparato a conoscere.<sup>20</sup>

Baliani remembers it too:

La Renault 4 era, per antonomasia, l’auto degli anni Settanta, l’auto del Movimento: consumava poco, non costava tanto, (...) era un’auto di sinistra (...). Su quell’auto abbiamo percorso le prime *on the road* nostrane (...). Quell’auto ora è un carro funebre.<sup>21</sup>

il volto resta fuori, scomposto, come se dormisse, come quelli che, vinti da una stanchezza senza tempo, crollano addormentati sul treno che li riporta a casa.<sup>22</sup>

Mario Luzi describes the body ‘Acciambellato in una sconcia stiva’.<sup>23</sup>

<sup>19</sup> Emilia Costantini, ‘Maria Fida Moro: Recito per sopravvivere’, *Corriere della Sera*, 8 September 1998, p. 38.

<sup>20</sup> Giampaolo Spinato, *Amici e nemici*, Milan: Rizzoli, 2004, p. 210.

<sup>21</sup> Marco Baliani, *Corpo di Stato. Il delitto Moro: una generazione divisa*, Milan: Rizzoli, 2003, p.70.

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 14.

Why is that picture so rooted in our collective visual memory? Some of Slavoj Žižek's reflections on the concept of the 'body of the king', which draw on Kantorowicz's classic study, give us a possible answer. Moro's body may perhaps be identified with that of the 'dead king'.<sup>24</sup> Moro, in fact, was seen by the Red Brigades as the symbol of the power to be attacked, the highest representative of the state at that time, that of the historic compromise, with the PCI being drawn into the 'area of government', the 'king' in the symbolic sense of the term, and to kill him demonstrated their ability to obstruct the established powers,

as if the very body of the King condenses in itself the secret cause of the People's enslavement to the forces of corruption and tyranny. (...) a cancerous protuberance contaminating the body of the People – which is why the purification of the People demands that this protuberance be cut off. To paraphrase Saint-Just: if the Republic is to survive, this man – the King – must be put to death, because his very existence poses a threat to the Republic.<sup>25</sup>

The Red Brigades applied the logic of 'the king's necessary execution', but in doing so they achieved the opposite result to the one they had sought, for two reasons. First, because 'to be a king is not an immediate natural property' but the product of a network of forces and ties. The killing of 'the king'/Moro did not constitute the 'dissolution of the network of social relations within which a certain person acquires the status of a king'.<sup>26</sup> On the contrary, the network of state forces, visible or not, showed themselves to be united and immovable, and indeed strengthened by this 'individual' execution.

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<sup>23</sup> Mario Luzi, *Per il battesimo dei nostri frammenti*, Milan: Garzanti, 1985, p. 31: 'Acciambellato in quella sponcia stiva | crivellato da quei colpi, | è lui, il capo di cinque governi, | punto fisso o stratega di almeno dieci altri, | la mente fina, il maestro | sottile | di metodica pazienza, esempio | vero di essa | anche spiritualmente: lui – | come negarlo? – quell'abbiosciato | sacco di già oscura carne | fuori da ogni possibile rispondenza | col suo passato | e con i suoi disegni, fuori atrocemente – | o ben dentro l'occhio | di una qualche silenziosa lungimiranza – quale? | Non lascia tempo di avvistarla | La superinseguita gibigiana'.

<sup>24</sup> Ernst H. Kantorowicz, *The King's Two Bodies: A Study in Mediaeval Political Theology*, Princeton, N.Y.: Princeton University Press, 1957.

<sup>25</sup> Slavoj Žižek, *For They Know Not What They Do*, London: Verso, 2002, p. 254.

<sup>26</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 254.

Second, because after the abduction the body of Moro, in Sciascia's terms, 'dissolved from its form' ('si sciolse dalla forma') like that of a tragic figure, lost its 'regality' in the eyes of the representatives of the state and ceased, therefore, to be 'the body of the king'. It did *not* happen, therefore, in this case, that

the more we represent the king as an ordinary man, caught in the same passions, victim of the same pettiness as we – that is, the more we accentuate his 'pathological' features' (in the Kantian meaning of the term) – the more he remains king.<sup>27</sup>

Above all, the men of the DC did *not* recognize the 'king', their 'leader', in the abducted Moro and an irreparable split opened up between his symbolic function and his empirical person. In the photograph of Moro's dead body – and perhaps this is why it is so well-known – one can see both the symbol, the representation of the Red Brigades' (failed) ideology and a momentary repairing of that split at the public level. In fact, once he had been killed and, above all, at the moment his body was recovered, Moro became 'recognized anew' in the public sphere as someone who had lost his life for the State and who would be lauded with official obsequies and the tricolour. However, the public had nothing beyond the image of the Renault 4 because Moro had left instructions for a private ceremony. In his letter to Benigno Zaccagnini of 24 April he had written:

per una evidente incompatibilità chiedo che ai miei funerali non partecipino né autorità dello Stato né uomini di partito. Chiedo di essere seguito dai pochi che mi hanno veramente voluto bene e sono degni perciò di accompagnarmi con la loro preghiera e il loro amore<sup>28</sup>

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<sup>27</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 256.

<sup>28</sup> Quoted in Sciascia, *L'affaire Moro*, p. 104; also in Moro, *Ultimi scritti*, p. 31.

– instructions that the family undertook to have respected, issuing this official statement:

La famiglia desidera che sia pienamente rispettata dalle autorità di Stato e di partito la precisa volontà di Aldo Moro. Ciò vuol dire: nessuna manifestazione pubblica o cerimonia o discorso; nessun lutto nazionale, né funerali di Stato o medaglia alla memoria. La famiglia si chiude nel silenzio e chiede silenzio. Sulla vita e sulla morte di Aldo Moro giudicherà la storia.<sup>29</sup>

It was an ending that inverted the story of Sophocles' *Antigone*: instead of insisting on a public recognition of the body by the *polis*, the family followed Moro's instructions and refused the state funeral, upholding the individual value of the body over the public one and rejecting a belated and useless 'recognition'. At the state's official memorial service both the coffin and Moro's wife and children were absent. This was not an 'Italian tragedy', as the title of a play we shall discuss, *Aldo Moro: une tragédie italienne*, and an essay by Giorgio Bocca both rhetorically suggest, but a private tragedy.<sup>30</sup> In addition, Moro's body encapsulates that 'totale disprezzo della persona umana' which Elsa Morante considered a characteristic of fascist society in the open letter she wrote to the Red Brigades on 20 March 1978.<sup>31</sup> As Marco Belpoliti has emphasised, it is not similar, however much it might recall it, to the dead body of Mussolini to which Sergio Luzzatto

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<sup>29</sup> Sciascia, *L'affaire Moro*, p. 158.

<sup>30</sup> Giorgio Bocca, *Moro. Una tragedia Italiana. Le lettere, i documenti, le polemiche*, Milan: Bompiani, 1978.

<sup>31</sup> Elsa Morante, 'Pagine di Diario', *Paragone*. Rivista mensile di arte figurativa e letteratura fondata da Roberto Longhi, anno XXXIX, Nuova serie, Numero 7 (456), February 1988, pp. 15, 16.



has dedicated an essay. It is rather 'l'icona di un potere che ha fatto della discrezione e dell'invisibilità il proprio *modus vivendi*'.<sup>32</sup>

To conclude this short overview, it is interesting to note that *Buongiorno, notte* (Marco Bellocchio, 2003) closes with archive footage of the state memorial service for Moro. It is an enactment of a terrifying *horror vacui*. Not only is Moro's body missing but the solemn faces of the statesmen and of Pope Paul VI – which calls to mind Francis Bacon's distorted portraits of Popes – convey that absence of power and state described by Pasolini.

It is not my intention to provide a reconstruction of the abduction, imprisonment and death of Moro, not only because, like all attempts at historical reconstruction, it would itself involve an interpretation of these events but because my interest lies in those portrayals that are to varying degrees fictionalized, and in their particular strategies of fictionalization and interpretation, rather than in the presumed single 'true' version of 'reality'. The body of works inspired by the Moro case is very diverse and, not surprisingly, it includes some that are significant to different degrees for an understanding of the events themselves and others that are more interesting in artistic and aesthetic terms. An extreme case is Daniele Luttazzi's play in which Andreotti meets some of Moro's jailers, including Prospero Gallinari and Mario Moretti, who take him to see Moro soon after he has been killed. At the sight of the corpse slumped in the boot of the Renault, Andreotti becomes aroused to the point of sodomizing the dead man.<sup>33</sup> There is also *Ladri di barzellette* (Bruno Collella and Leonardo Giuliano, 2004)

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<sup>32</sup> Marco Belpoliti, *Settanta*, Turin: Einaudi, 2002, p. 37. Sergio Luzzatto's study is *Il corpo del duce. Un cadavere tra immaginazione, storia e memoria*, Turin: Einaudi, 1998.

<sup>33</sup> Daniele Luttazzi, *Dialoghi platonici e altre storie*, first performed at the Teatro Modena, Genoa, 24 November 2003. Threatened with legal action by Moro's widow, Eleonora Chiavarelli, Luttazzi defended his play as follows: 'Non c'è nulla di visivo nel mio spettacolo, c'è un attore che legge dei testi: ho scelto il genere grottesco, con i toni del romanzo rosa. (...) Aldo Moro, per la cui figura ho il totale e massimo rispetto, viene indicato come vittima sacrificale. (...) Stiamo attenti, si penetrano i fori di proiettile di Aldo

a surreal comedy about a producer who wants to get funding to make a trilogy about Moro and terrorism in Italy but only manages to raise enough for a sequel to *Barzellette* (Carlo Vanzina, 2003). The plot of the film might allude critically to the impossibility of making films of civil importance in Italy or alternatively it might be a parody of that very type of film. The output, then, is extremely varied. Cinema, theatre and literature make the events happen again in the act of reconstructing them. They are an instrument of creative memory. They are instances of contact with an era, the 1970s, which has not yet been fully worked over or worked through.<sup>34</sup>

I have made a selection of the available works about the abduction and death of Moro, starting with Sciascia's *L'affaire Moro*. I give this text particular prominence both because it served as a template for later works, which took its reflections as a reference point, and because it allowed what is in my view a tragic interpretation of the figure of Moro to emerge. At the end of the chapter I shall look briefly at two texts that both loop back to Sciascia's: Paolo Spinato's *Amici e nemici*, one of the most recent written fictionalizations of the Moro case, which covers it from the massacre in Via Fani to Moro's death and beyond but which pays particular attention, like Sciascia's text, to Moro the man held captive in the Prigione del Popolo, and Adriano Sofri's *L'ombra di Moro*, which follows Sciascia in its close 'symptomatic' reading of Moro's words but analyses a different set of writings: those uncovered in 1990 in the hideout in

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Moro, non altro'. Donatella Alfonso and Margherita Rubino, 'Luttazzi e l'orrore artistico: niente scandalo per Moro', *la Repubblica*, Genoa edition, 26 November 2003.

<sup>34</sup> For the debate on the late 1970s as an underinvestigated period it is worth quoting the remarks of Emmanuel Betta and Enrica Capussotti: 'Cogliamo la difficoltà delle principali opere sull'Italia Repubblicana di confrontarsi con le forme politiche radicali successive al 1974 e con il movimento del '77, al meglio liquidato come una ripetizione del '68, al peggio come un'unica omogenea manifestazione di terrorismo schiacciata sulla P38 e sulla cacciata di Luciano Lama dalla Sapienza di Roma. Se guardiamo ad alcune autorevoli ricostruzioni di lungo periodo della storia repubblicana – Lanaro e Ginsborg – notiamo come il primo dedichi al '68 (...) un capitolo e al '77 alcuni riferimenti nelle pagine dedicate al terrorismo; similmente Ginsborg propone un capitolo all'epoca dell'"azione collettiva" (1967-1973) e al '77 tre pagine anch'esse all'interno del paragrafo sugli "anni di piombo". "Il buono, il brutto, il cattivo"', p. 121.

Via Monte Nevoso, Milan, which constitute Moro's famous 'memoir' (though according to Sergio Flamigni the text we have is incomplete) written during his imprisonment.<sup>35</sup>

In the case of cinematic representations the selection is easier since there appear to be only three extant feature films on the Moro case: the already mentioned *Buongiorno, notte*, Renzo Martinelli's *Piazza delle Cinque Lune* (2003) and Giuseppe Ferrara's *Il caso Moro* (1986). As for the theatrical works, I examine *Corpo di Stato. Il delitto Moro: una generazione divisa* by Marco Baliani, *Aldo Moro: une tragédie italienne* by Giorgio Ferrara, *Lato destro* by Gianluca Floris and *L'ira del sole. Un 9 di Maggio* by Antonio Maria Di Fresco and Maria Fida Moro, all of which I have seen either on stage or in video recordings. There are two other plays about the Moro case of which I have seen only a script and which I shall not discuss, since I consider performance to be a fundamental part of a theatrical work. These texts are *Il caso Moro* by Roberto Buffagni,<sup>36</sup> performed, like the works by Baliani and Di Fresco and Maria Fida Moro, on the occasion of the twentieth anniversary of Moro's death, and *I giorni del no* by Mario Maranzana.<sup>37</sup> Nor shall I discuss *La Tragedia di Aldo Moro* by Dario Fo, which has never been performed and of which there remains only an incomplete script and some sketches.<sup>38</sup>

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<sup>35</sup> Sergio Flamigni, *La tela del ragno. Il delitto Moro*, Milan: Kaos, 2003 (first edition: Rome: Edizioni Associate, 1988) and *Convergenze parallele, le Brigate rosse, i servizi segreti e il delitto Moro*, Rome: Kaos, 1998. The writings found in Via Monte Nevoso were published in *L'Unità* on 23 October and are republished in Francesco M. Biscione (ed.), *Il memoriale di Aldo Moro rinvenuto in via Monte Nevoso a Milano*, Rome: Coletti, 1993. On these writings see also Adriano Sofri, *L'ombra di Moro*, Palermo: Sellerio, 1991.

<sup>36</sup> Roberto Buffagni, *Il Caso Moro*, directed by Cristina Pezzoli, first performed in Parma at the Teatro Due, 12 March 1998.

<sup>37</sup> Mario Maranzana, *I giorni del no*, directed by Augusto Zucchi, first performed in Rome, Sala Umberto, May 1986; see Tommaso Chiaretti, 'Quel 16 marzo lontano ma ancora così vivo', *la Repubblica*, 22 May 1986.

<sup>38</sup> <http://62.110.58.111/>, Archivio Dario Fo e Franca Rame (last visited 8 July 2005). See also Tony Mitchell, *Dario Fo: People's Court Jester*, London: Methuen, 1999, according to which *La tragedia di Aldo Moro* was performed as a reading for the first time at the Palazzetto dello Sport in Padua on 21 June 1979. Other references to the Moro case are in Fo's *Clacson, trombette e pernacchi* (first performance,

I have divided the representations of the Moro case into two groups. The first consists of those which choose to depict Moro and the brigatisti during the 55 days of the abduction and which may in turn be divided into those taking place ‘inside’ and ‘outside’ the Prigione del Popolo. These are works which make little or no reference to the hypothesis that the abduction had been plotted by the secret services. The second group consists of those works which concentrate on this hypothesis and which place their main emphasis on the massacre in Via Fani. I shall discuss the two groups in this order because the representations of the massacre and the ‘conspiracy theories’ with which they try to explain it are more recent than the works on the imprisonment. The theatrical work of Antonio Maria Di Fresco and Maria Fida Moro constitutes a case apart – the self-narrative of a personal tragedy – and I have decided to discuss it alongside Baliani’s self-narrative in *Corpo di Stato* as spectator of the event and narrator of it for his generation.

In both cases, there are other characters as well as Aldo Moro, principally the members of the Red Brigades, as a group ‘in action’, the members of Moro’s family and the representatives of the state. In analysing these works – the written texts but above all the films and theatrical pieces – I have identified echoes of Greek tragedy as well as motifs which constitute a constant in descriptions of the political violence of the *anni di piombo* and which I shall explore further in the subsequent chapters: intergenerational conflict (Chapter 2), gender stereotypes and representations of the female terrorist (Chapter 3), and use of the self-narrative (Chapter 4). In this way the Moro affair constitutes an exemplary case study.

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directed by Fo, at Cinema Teatro Cristallo, Milan, 14 January 1981) and *Quasi per caso una donna: Elisabetta* (first performance, directed by Fo, in Riccione on 7 December 1984) in which ‘There’s even a sort of Moro affair, when three lords are kidnapped and held to ransom by rebels. She, naturally, doesn’t give into this, and maintains a hard line’ (Fo, *La Repubblica*, 6 December 1984, quoted in Mitchell, *Dario Fo: People’s Court Jester*, p. 183). One might also recall here Fo’s ‘prescient’ *Il Fanfani rapito* (1975).

Although these texts make reference to Greek tragedy their adoption of it as a model is only partial because the forces in conflict are not represented as being on the same level or of equal strength and do not correspond to Aristotle's definition of tragedy, according to which it tends to represent people above the level of ordinary human beings: 'This very distinction separates tragedy from comedy: the latter tends to represent people as inferior, the former superior, to existing humans'.<sup>39</sup> Only Moro is completely tragic and may be seen to evoke the character of Antigone in Sophocles' tragedy in his respect for the profound values which rule civil life (though not in being willing to give his life in the name of dedication to family). His antagonists, the brigatisti, who for him represent 'blind necessity', the forces of that ineluctable and inscrutable fate which is a fundamental element of Greek tragedy, are portrayed as insecure, in pursuit of an unlikely consensus, fearful of even the most fleeting contact with the world, which, nonetheless, they presume to change. They are depicted as reproducing slogans, having a confused political ideology or as pawns in the hands of the state. Not even the state is an antagonist worthy of Moro, a Creon who will uphold the written laws honestly but at the same time be willing to examine his own position critically.<sup>40</sup> In the works examined in the part of the chapter on Moro's imprisonment the state is barely shown and its rigidity appears pitiless. It is mainly in the texts analysed in the subsequent part, on the conspiracy theories, that the state is described as an inescapable power, something manipulative and malign. Classical tragedy, therefore, is evoked in these works but only up to a point. In this respect the representations might

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<sup>39</sup> Aristotle, *Poetics* (ed. and trans. by Stephen Halliwell), Loeb Classical Library, Cambridge MA: Harvard University Press, 1995, 1448a 15.

<sup>40</sup> Antigone, in Sophocles' play, in the name of unwritten laws, opposes the edict of Creon, King of Thebes, prohibiting the burial of her brother Polyneices, considered an enemy of the city, and for this reason she is arrested and imprisoned. Creon is eventually persuaded to relent by the seer Teiresias but too late. The guards sent to free Antigone from her cell find that she has taken her own life, as has her fiancé, Haemon, Creon's son, whose body lies next to hers. Eurydice, Creon's wife, also kills herself on learning of her son's death.

be said to bear out, partially at least, George Steiner's well-known thesis in *The Death of Tragedy* that the only western mythology that can really support tragedy is the classical one and that therefore both Marxism and Christianity, which involve narratives of redemption, have made tragedy impossible in the modern era.<sup>41</sup>

## 1.2 Sciascia's *L'affaire Moro*: a template text

*L'affaire Moro* by Leonardo Sciascia can be considered the literary-political template of all subsequent representations of the case. Through an analysis of Moro's letters it provides a view not only of the days of his imprisonment but also of the actions of the state, with few references to the hypothesis of possible involvement of the secret services in the abduction. Giuseppe Traina stresses the political dimension of Sciascia's text when he writes that

si risolve soprattutto nel denunciare inflessibilmente, nelle sue ambiguità e nei suoi opportunismi, il comportamento del cosiddetto 'partito della fermezza', che rifiutò qualunque trattativa con i terroristi e ogni tentativo di salvare Moro.<sup>42</sup>

Sciascia for his part insisted on the 'literary' value of his own text, but not without irony over the concept of 'literature', which he presented as anything but a fictional sphere detached from reality and truth ('[è] letteratura e spero che sia buona letteratura, di quella che fa sentire la verità'). He also stressed how the text, written in the heat of the

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<sup>41</sup> George Steiner, *The Death of Tragedy*, London: Faber & Faber, 1961. Many other scholars have since asserted, against Steiner, the possibility of tragic representation in the contemporary world. See for example Martin Esslin, *The Theatre of the Absurd*, London, Eyre & Spottiswoode, 1962; Jonathan Dollimore, *Radical Tragedy: Religion, Ideology and Power in the Drama of Shakespeare and his contemporaries*, Harvester Press: Brighton, 1984; Terry Eagleton, *Sweet Violence: A Study of the Tragic*, Oxford: Blackwell, 2002.

<sup>42</sup> Giuseppe Traina, *Leonardo Sciascia*, Milan: Bruno Mondadori, 1999, p. 45.

moment, just a few months after the event, oscillates in style ‘tra la ricostruzione documentaria, l’analisi testuale e “l’alto” giallo letterario’.<sup>43</sup> Baliani in *Corpo di Stato* recalls having read it many times and having been struck in particular by the author’s ability to give ‘una presentazione spietata e allo stesso tempo compassionevole’ of Aldo Moro.<sup>44</sup> *Aldo Moro: une tragédie italienne* by Giorgio Ferrara bases itself on Moro’s letters and uses Sciascia’s reflections to annotate them. A character in Cataldo’s *Romanzo criminale* quotes from Sciascia’s observations on the Italian police.<sup>45</sup>

Over and above these acknowledged references, I have identified at a macrotextual level three main motifs in *L’affaire Moro* which are reiterated in later texts. The first is the narrative of a ‘dissolving away from form’ (‘sciogliersi dalla forma’):

Moro comincia, pirandellianamente, a sciogliersi dalla forma, poichè tragicamente è entrato nella vita. Da personaggio ad ‘uomo solo’, da ‘uomo solo’ a creatura: i passaggi che Pirandello assegna all’unica possibile salvezza.<sup>46</sup>

The implicit reference here is to the opposition in Pirandello’s work between ‘form’ and ‘life’, that is to say between the more or less fixed and rigid form or mask which each person (or literary character) assumes and presents to others, as well as to himself or herself, and the multifaceted ‘life’ teeming within that same person. When the form is dissolved, a personal existential crisis is triggered.<sup>47</sup> Moro’s ‘sciogliersi dalla forma’

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<sup>43</sup> Both statements are from an interview given by Sciascia to S. Malatesta, ‘Io vi accuso!’, *Panorama*, 26 September 1978, respectively pp. 72 and 69; quoted in Anne Mullen, *Inquisition and Inquiry: Sciascia’s Inchiesta*, Market Harborough: Troubadour, 2000, p. 54.

<sup>44</sup> Baliani, *Corpo di Stato*, p. 83.

<sup>45</sup> De Cataldo, *Romanzo criminale*, pp. 124, 125.

<sup>46</sup> Sciascia, *L’affaire Moro*, p. 76.

<sup>47</sup> The distinction between life and form was initially proposed in an essay on Pirandello by Adriano Tilgher in his *Studi sul teatro contemporaneo* (Rome: Libreria di Scienze e Lettere, 1923) and was then taken up by Pirandello himself, starting with the preface which he added to the fourth edition (1925) of *Sei personaggi in cerca d’autore* (first performed in 1921). See also the two essays by Sciascia, *Pirandello e il pirandellismo* (Caltanissetta, Sciascia, 1953) and *Pirandello e la Sicilia* (Caltanissetta, Sciascia, 1961).

seems similar to me to the fall of Sophocles' heroes. In both instances the protagonist becomes a 'creature' alone in the face of an inescapable fate, not 'recognized' by those around him who prefer to consider him 'no longer himself', mad even:

To those who face him, friends and enemies alike, the hero seems unreasonable almost to the point of madness, suicidally bold, impervious to argument, intransigent, angry; an impossible person whom only time can cure. But to the hero himself the opinion of others is irrelevant. His loyalty to his conception of himself, and the necessity to perform the action that conception imposes, prevail over all other considerations.<sup>48</sup>

Sciascia himself seems to suggest this correspondence with the tragic hero when he writes that Moro '*tragicamente è entrato nella vita*'. His Christian Democrat colleagues at first exaggerated his role as a 'great statesman' and were then unable to 'recognize' him from his letters, thus condemning him to civil death. Sciascia condemns them in their turn for this, for not living up to their '*dovere alla pietà*'. Of the brigatisti he says they were '*i figli bastardi della nostra indignazione. E anche della nostra viltà. Siamo in obbligo di riscattarli: spendendo bene, e nel bene, gli anni che ci restano, con molta attenzione, con molto scrupolo, con molta sofferenza.*'<sup>49</sup>

The doubt expressed by Moro, in his letter about Taviani of 10 April, whether, in the inflexible attitude shown by the government, there was not '*forse (...) una indicazione americana e tedesca*', brings out another aspect of the '*sciogliersi dalla forma*'. Commenting on these words Sciascia introduces the hypothesis that the abduction might have been manipulated and that possibly the action of the terrorists '*nell'aver catturato Moro, nel tenerlo prigioniero – corrisponde anche a un disegno americano e tedesco, vi concorre involontariamente, casualmente lo agevola – o*

<sup>48</sup> Bernard M. W. Knox, *The Heroic Temper: Studies in Sophoclean Tragedy*, Berkeley, Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1983 (first edition 1964), p. 28.

<sup>49</sup> Sciascia, *L'affaire Moro*, p. 45.



addirittura ne è parte'.<sup>50</sup> Sciascia does not have an answer to this but he suggests that the state could have 'won' through betrayal and with the help of foreign secret services and that even the brigatisti may have been, in part and involuntarily, involved. In this way, the theme of duplicity, above all that of the state, emerges. This theme is also central to some of the representations of the Moro case which I shall discuss in the last part of this chapter.

The second motif in Sciascia's book that is taken up by subsequent texts is the relationship between truth and literature:

L'impressione che tutto *L'affaire* Moro accada, per così dire, in letteratura, viene principalmente da quella specie di fuga dei fatti, da quell'astrarsi dei fatti – nel momento stesso in cui accadono e ancora di più contemplandoli poi nel loro insieme – in una dimensione di conseguenzialità immaginativa o fantastica indefettibile e da cui ridonda una costante, tenace ambiguità. Tanta perfezione può essere dell'immaginazione, della fantasia; non della realtà.<sup>51</sup>

Belpoliti emphasises the difficulty of making adequate sense of this assertion. Sciascia probably meant that reality exists, that facts occur, but that

contemplandoli finiscono per astrarsi, sfuggire alla loro stessa natura di fatti per scivolare in una dimensione immaginativa, fantastica, così che non è più evidente se tra un fatto e l'altro vi sia davvero un nesso causale o una dipendenza reciproca: tutto è inevitabilmente ambiguo.<sup>52</sup>

In my opinion these statements aim to establish a reflection (which is also fundamental to the present thesis) not only on how facts and events are apprehended – a process which necessarily involves interpretation – but also on how they are narrated in accordance with particular literary and cultural models. Literature in other words is

<sup>50</sup> *Idid.*, p. 78; the full text of the letter on Taviani is in Moro, *Ultimi scritti*, pp. 19-22.

<sup>51</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 29.

<sup>52</sup> Belpoliti, *Settanta*, p. 11.

considered as *arché* or origin. Robin Erica Wagner Pacifici has written a study of the media representations of the Moro affair during the 55 days of the abduction which concludes that they took the form of a 'melodrama',<sup>53</sup> and indeed Sciascia himself writes of the 'melodramma di amore allo Stato che sulla scena italiana grandiosamente si recitò dal 16 marzo al 9 maggio del 1978'.<sup>54</sup> Alberto Arbasino similarly described the media depictions as being like successive episodes (*puntate*) of a soap opera:

una puntata al giorno, come nei quotidiani dell'Ottocento, e come alla televisione americana, fruite come rappresentazione; e le apprensioni e le impazienze si sono trasformate in una attenzione da spettatori di 'sceneggiato'.<sup>55</sup>

These observations and, those of Sciascia, on the relationship between events and literature recall the theses of Hayden White and Northrop Frye on narration and the representation of reality as being structured according to literary models, without as a consequence endorsing the view that each representation of the facts can or must be accepted. Sciascia, in fact, maintains that literature is 'la più assoluta forma che la verità possa assumere',<sup>56</sup> and he also emphasises the relationship between facts and literature in a passage in which, in a sort of metanarrative parenthesis, he speaks of himself as author of *L'affaire*: 'sto scrivendo queste pagine sull'Affaire Moro in un mareggiare di ritagli di giornali e col dizionario del Tommaseo solido in mezzo come un frangiflutti'.<sup>57</sup> Besides, the Moro case is constructed right from the start, as Sciascia points out, through *the written word*: Moro's letters, the Red Brigades' communiqués, newspaper articles.

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<sup>53</sup> Robin Erica Wagner-Pacifici, *The Moro Morality Play: Terrorism as Social Drama*, Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1986.

<sup>54</sup> Sciascia, *L'affaire Moro*, p. 34.

<sup>55</sup> Alberto Arbasino, *In questo stato*, p. 5.

<sup>56</sup> Leonardo Sciascia, *La scomparsa di Majorana*, Turin: Einaudi, 1975 quoted in Belpoliti, *Settanta*, p. 18.

<sup>57</sup> Sciascia, *L'affaire Moro*, p. 114.

Referring to the letters Moro wrote from the Prigione del Popolo, Charles Klopp has highlighted their uniqueness as 'one-sided' discourse:

It is one of many ironies of the Moro affair, that the final, crucial moments in the life of this exceptionally reserved, private individual were played out in a public arena where his increasingly desperate cries for help from what had been his intimate friends echoed vainly in a silent public arena.<sup>58</sup>

However, replies were written to Moro's letters; some of them – including those from members of his family and from the Pope – were published in the newspapers and it is possible that his captors let him see them. In this respect his cries went out not so much into a *silent* public arena as into a political public sphere that *did not want to listen*, burdened as it was with its own construction of a non-Moro, one unable to understand, express his will and thus write and communicate. In this respect his discourse was indeed truly 'one-sided'.

The third motif which makes Sciascia's text a kind of template is the presence of frequent metaphors of light. *L'affaire Moro* begins with a description of a walk and the sight of fireflies, a reference which provides Sciascia with the opportunity to evoke Pasolini's definition of Italy, from the early 1960s onwards, as a country in which there were no longer any fireflies. These had been a symbol of the 'pietà e (...) speranza' of the old Italy in the period before the economic miracle and the definitive establishment of the system of 'il Potere'.<sup>59</sup> Furthermore, in more than one passage, Sciascia

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<sup>58</sup> Charles Klopp, *Sentences: The Memoirs and Letters of Italian Political Prisoners from Benvenuto Cellini to Aldo Moro*, Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1999, p. 185. As Klopp stresses, Moro was not imprisoned by institutional forces so one may presume that he feared not so much the length of the sentence, which prisoners normally know, but its uncertain outcome. Curiously, it is precisely in this condition that certain detainees are presently being held in some countries: in Guantánamo Bay and Belmarsh the detainee does not know how long the detention is going to last and the detention itself takes place without a trial.

<sup>59</sup> Pier Paolo Pasolini, '1° febbraio 1975. L'articolo delle lucciole', in *Scritti corsari*, Milan: Garzanti, 1990 (first published in *Il Corriere della sera* with the title 'Il vuoto del potere in Italia'), p. 133; Sciascia, *L'affaire Moro*, p. 13. It is interesting that in *Buongiorno, notte*, as well as the frequent references to light,

emphasises that the abduction and killing of Moro was characterized by moments in which clarity, the sort of clarity that dazzles, is rejected and replaced by an 'invisibilità dell'evidenza'.<sup>60</sup> He recalls here the location of the Prigione del Popolo in the centre of Rome, so accessible and yet so untraceable.<sup>61</sup>

In relation to this I should like to recall some interesting remarks made by Thomas Elsaesser about 'a new kind of censorship – that of citizens being blinded by the light, rather than being kept in the dark'.<sup>62</sup> Elsaesser was talking about *Todesspiel* (*Death Game*), a television film made in Germany by Heinrich Breloer in 1997 about the years of political violence in the Federal Republic and particularly about the state's handling of the abduction and killing in September-October 1977 of industrialist Hanns-Martin Schleyer by the Rote Armee Fraktion. This four-hour documentary, broadcast in prime time, portrayed the German government in such a way as to impress the spectator with the efficiency with which it had conducted the fight against terrorism. The film thus promoted a clear and reassuring perspective but, as Elsaesser suggested, it was that of a demagogic regime: it 'revolved around the possibility of saying "we" for a given society or national community'.<sup>63</sup>

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there is the dream of Moro's walk outside his prison, which is perhaps a reference to *The Walk and Other Stories* by Robert Walser (London: Calder, 1957), the text Sciascia was reading when he heard the news of Moro's abduction.

<sup>60</sup> Sciascia, *L'affaire Moro*, p. 43.

<sup>61</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 46.

<sup>62</sup> Thomas Elsaesser, 'From Censorship to Over-Exposure: The Red Army Fraction, *Germany in Autumn* and *Death Game*', in Leonardo Quaresima, Alessandra Raengo and Laura Vichi (eds), *I limiti della rappresentazione. Censura visibile, modi di rappresentazione nel cinema*, Atti del VI Convegno Internazionale di Studi sul Cinema, Udine, 17-20 March 1999, Udine: Forum, 2000, p. 290.

<sup>63</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 290.

### 1.3 Representations of the imprisonment

#### *Buongiorno, notte*

Qual è il ruolo che (non) hanno avuto le donne italiane, in tutti i 55 giorni dal rapimento all'assassinio del Presidente della Dc? Chiamare in causa le donne su una tragedia, quella di Aldo Moro e della sua famiglia in primo luogo, e di conseguenza di tutto il nostro Paese: perchè? La risposta è nella premessa da cui nasce questo lavoro: impliciti o espliciti il progetto, la speranza, l'utopia di una società senza violenza, senza sangue, senza 'vittime necessarie', sono presenti in tutta la storia delle donne che hanno pensato, scritto, creduto e lottato: le madri per non dire le nonne del femminismo di oggi.<sup>64</sup>

Marco Bellocchio in *Buongiorno, notte* specifically wanted to examine a woman in relation to the Moro case but a woman who, in those years, had chosen a path of violence.<sup>65</sup> The film in fact gives prominence to the internal perspective of the Prigione del Popolo and the interior 'subjective' one of Chiara (Maya Sansa), the only woman of the group, through whom we see Moro. Contrasted with her perspective are those of the other brigatisti – Mariano (Luigi Lo Cascio), Primo (Giovanni Calcagno) and Ernesto (Pier Giorgio Bellocchio) – and the external perspective of the media and public opinion. Bellocchio develops this gradual but never radical separation between Chiara and the others, a subjective isolation which allows her to identify her situation with that of Moro. The other brigatisti are represented as a 'group' whose internal dynamics and whose differences from opposing groups (notably, the state) are described, which raises generational issues (with respect to Moro) and gender issues (with respect to Chiara). The director, in fact, claimed to have represented 'per la prima volta un padre rispetto a dei giovani, a dei figli degeneri' and to have wanted to express the contradictions of the

<sup>64</sup> Anna Maria Mori, *Il silenzio delle donne e il caso Moro*, Cosenza: Edizioni Lerici, 1978, p. 7.

<sup>65</sup> *Buongiorno, notte* was released in cinemas in October 2003, after having been in competition in the Venice Film Festival, which it did not win, despite having been among the favourites. The winner that year was *The Return*, directed by Andrei Zvyagintsev (Russia 2003), the powerful story of a father's return into the life of his two sons after twelve years' absence in prison.

choice of armed resistance through a female character in a male world.<sup>66</sup> In the following analysis of the film I shall concentrate, in turn, on Chiara in relation to Moro, on how the interactions between generations are represented and how the film exemplifies the three motifs articulated in Sciascia's template text.

Although she is guilty, Chiara embodies, with Moro, the living human pivot around which the film develops. Moro (Roberto Herlitzka), who rarely appears with shots of his whole body, is a magnanimous character, a Sophoclean hero, and like the heroes of Sophocles he is a solitary man unable to communicate, not because of lack of will or personal limitations but because 'love of family', and 'dedication to the common good' are, for those who hear them, words that no longer make sense:

The Sophoclean hero acts in a terrifying vacuum, a present which has no future to comfort and no past to guide, an isolation in time and space which imposes on the hero the full responsibility for his own actions and consequences. It is precisely this fact which makes possible the greatness of the Sophoclean heroes; the source of their action lies in them alone, nowhere else (...). Sophocles presents us for the first time with what we recognize as a 'tragic hero': one who, unsupported by the gods and in the face of human opposition, makes a decision which springs from the deepest layer of his individual nature, his *physis*, and then blindly, ferociously, heroically maintains that decision even to the point of self-destruction.<sup>67</sup>

The lucid intelligence that has led the Moro of Bellocchio's film to make his own choices in a rational and responsible way is contrasted with the obtuse repetitive slogans of the brigatisti, who have uncritically absorbed the words, rather than the reasons, of others. This, as I have said, is a *partial* representation of classical tragedy because, alongside Moro as tragic hero, the people who for him represent 'blind

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<sup>66</sup> *Buongiorno, notte*, Press Book (distributed at the screening at the Venice Film Festival, September 2003), p. 7.

<sup>67</sup> Knox, *The Heroic Temper*, p. 5.

necessity', the forces of an ineluctable and inscrutable fate, a fundamental element of classical tragedy, are depicted as insecure, in search of an improbable consensus, out of touch with the world which they nonetheless presume to change. The film represents the terrorists' acts as folly, without exploring their ideological basis, and thus implies a condemnation that is more emotional than political and is therefore incapable of impacting profoundly on the audience.

Emmanuel Betta and Enrica Capussotti have emphasised how, in this and other narratives of the *anni di piombo*, 'questa incapacità di declinare al presente significati considerati ormai svaniti viene tradotta nella narrazione come qualcosa di prossimo alla amoralità'.<sup>68</sup> In this way the relationship between violence and ideology is often 'rappresentato come il non detto per eccellenza di chi ha partecipato a quella stagione'.<sup>69</sup> Even if Bellocchio manages to establish the contrast between Moro's reasoning and that of his captors, what prevents him from producing a fully tragic representation of the affair is the failure to explore in any depth the motives of the brigatisti. An exploration of this sort would not have justified the decision to kill a man, but it would at least have constituted an attempt to understand the choices made by the clandestine movement and to work through the grief resulting from them.

Unlike Moro in the film, Chiara is not a fully tragic character. She is not the *victim* of an ineluctable fate but is responsible for her own political choice, although the underlying reasons for it are not explained. There are certainly some tragic elements in the way she is portrayed, such as her failure to recognize her own doubts, her own interior crisis and her own incapacity to communicate with her comrades. These failures

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<sup>68</sup> Betta and Capussotti, 'Il buono, il brutto, il cattivo', p. 115.

<sup>69</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 115, 116.

suggest the destiny of incommunicability of the Sophoclean hero but they are not sufficient for Chiara to be categorized as such:

Mariano:           Liberarlo senza condizioni è una presa per il culo:  
                          dovremmo liberarlo così, in cambio di niente?  
Primo:             Chiara, non ci vogliono riconoscere!  
Chiara:            Ma perché vi dovrebbero riconoscere se voi non  
                          riconoscete loro, scusa?  
Primo:             Dici 'noi', ma non sei anche tu dei nostri?  
Chiara:            Sì, ma non capisco perché dobbiamo ucciderlo.  
                          Niente mi convince che sia giusto farlo, posso dirlo?

The 'non-recognition' of Moro by his presumed friends is a parallel motif which adds to the tragedy of his portrayal:

Mariano:           I tuoi amici non ti riconoscono più.  
Moro:             Non mi riconoscono più...Neanche io li riconosco più.  
                          Credono che io sia diventato un altro, sì sono un altro, ma  
                          non come credono loro. Io sono sempre me stesso.

*Buongiorno, notte* shows the internal dynamics of an armed group of three men and one woman. But what type of group is it exactly? According to Robert K. Merton's definition, the 'small group' comprises a number of individuals who both see themselves and are seen as group members, with a relationship of interaction with one another. The small group differs in these respects from the 'social group' which instead is based on a sense of belonging to a collective or a social category of which the members share a perception of their own unity.<sup>70</sup> Benedict Anderson considered the latter kinds of group, at the level of the class or the nation, as 'imagined communities'.<sup>71</sup>

<sup>70</sup> Robert K. Merton, *Social Theory and Social Structure*, New York: The Free Press of Glencoe, 1957, p. 332.

<sup>71</sup> Benedict R. Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origins and Spread of Nationalism*, London: Verso, 1983.



In Bellocchio's representation, the brigatisti appear mainly to be a small group although they also show signs of belonging to an imagined social community: they are 'Italians', 'revolutionaries', 'Marxists', 'Leninists', etc. In his portrayal, Bellocchio acknowledges the group as the place where individuals can conduct the same moral life together but this could be risky because of the potential destruction of personal judgement:

When a certain number of individuals in the midst of a political society are found to have ideas, interests, sentiments, and occupations not shared by the rest of the population, it is inevitable that they will be attracted toward each other under the influence of these likenesses. (...) But once the group is formed, a moral life appears naturally carrying the mark of the particular condition in which it has developed. (...) This attachment has in it something surpassing the individual.<sup>72</sup>

One characteristic of the group of brigatisti which emerges in Bellocchio's film, as it had done previously in Ferrara's film *Il caso Moro*, which I shall discuss in the last part of this chapter, is their need to share the same perception of themselves and of the situation they are living through as members of the same social unit, in order to reinforce the cohesion of the group. One can see how individually they identify or try to identify, *inter alia*, with the group to which they belong. In order to 'achieve positive social identity', Henri Tajfel has observed, 'ingroup-outgroup comparisons must yield perceived differences which favour the ingroup'.<sup>73</sup> A value judgement is linked to this differentiation, in that the group must try to maximize the differences between themselves and other groups and accentuate the similarities amongst themselves within the group.<sup>74</sup>

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<sup>72</sup> Émile Durkheim, *The Division of Labour in Society*, New York: Macmillan, 1933, p. 14.

<sup>73</sup> Henri Tajfel, *Differentiations between Social Groups: Studies in the Social Psychology of Intergroup Relations*, London, New York and San Francisco: Academic Press, 1978, p. 236.

<sup>74</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 27, 98.

In order to apply this theory to the representation of the Red Brigades, it is necessary to link interdependence in the assignment with interdependence between group members. Because they share common goals and follow a single objective the results obtained by each member will also bear consequences for all the others. In *Buongiorno, notte* the possibility for the brigatisti to think independently is almost always replaced by 'esprit de corps', or 'group thought', which leads them to kill Moro. It is in this desperate group view that Chiara buries her own doubts, her uncertainties and in turn tries to convince a companion in crisis not to go home to his girlfriend 'ma noi siamo soldati (...) compagno Ernesto, un po' di entusiasmo rivoluzionario!'. The cohesion and existence of a group depend on its members' loyalty to the norms to which they adhered in order to join it, and on the strategy of relations between members of the group itself and between them and other groups. For this reason, the weaknesses and doubts of some of the group members are perceived as a threat by the others. On the contrary, the representation of the mechanical repetition of slogans, the use of the same language and of the same emotional and emotive mechanisms on the part of the brigatisti is designed to show the reinforced group spirit, the congruence between the reasons of the individual and those of the group.

In depictions of the internal organization of their group – in the management of their living areas and in the assignment of leadership roles – the brigatisti are often shown as following the model of the traditional family and its use of domestic space. In *Buongiorno, notte* and *Il caso Moro* it is the female figures who take on the care of the house and the preparation of meals and the leader of the groups, organized as a pyramid structure, is a man.<sup>75</sup> As often happens in groups, the authority of the leaders is ensured

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<sup>75</sup> For a detailed description of the structure of the Red Brigades see Alison Jamieson, 'Entry, Discipline and Exit in the Italian Red Brigades', *Terrorism and Political Violence*, Vol. 2, No. 1, Spring 1990, pp. 4

largely by the recognition and acceptance accorded to them by the rank and file and this recognition seems tied to the masculine gender. In *Buongiorno, notte* the members of the group are shown as interacting under the coordination of a leader who is concentrated on the task at hand and pays little attention to the relationships amongst his comrades; his role is more instrumental than expressive or socio-emotional. The latter role is reserved for the female figure of Chiara. In the film Chiara and Ernesto have to pretend to be a couple in order to pass in and out of the hideout without arousing suspicion. The apartment, the theatre of group dynamics where cohesion and dissent emerge, is also the frame of the fiction, the veil of appearance for the outside world and a voluntary prison for the brigatisti.<sup>76</sup> The apartment/hideout becomes the place where private, public and political intermingle at one moment and clash the next because political choice negates the private sphere, which remains such only in appearance – the home, the couple, the family – while at the same time the political is reduced to a slogan.

Linked to this theme is the representation of Chiara's lack of maternal instinct. In choosing armed resistance she has decided to be a 'combatant' instead of a mother, and yet she ends up assuming the role of the 'mother' in the hideout. We see the first allusion to this theme in the opening sequences of the film when the estate agent who shows her the apartment/hideout points out one room as a possible child's bedroom. It is significant that the room is enveloped in darkness and the window is not shown. In another sequence, in which Chiara is awaiting her companions' return from the ambush of Moro and his bodyguards, a young neighbour rings the doorbell and asks her to mind her baby for a few minutes. Despite Chiara's refusal, the mother thrusts the baby into

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-5. Although the pyramid structure characterized the BR from the beginnings of the organization (1970) it underwent a number of structural changes to do with the independence of the individual columns.

<sup>76</sup> In *Buongiorno, notte* the BR hideout is a ground-floor apartment whose doors and windows are barred, suggesting confinement and imprisonment.

her arms promising to return in a little while. Chiara is left with the child in her arms but has no tenderness towards it. She is only tense and awkward and decides to put the baby on the sofa where she leaves it alone without worrying whether it might fall. In Chapter Three I shall look further at this refusal of maternity, one of the most common stereotypes in the portrayal of women terrorists.

Chiara is the one character to be shot in extreme close-up, often against walls, doors and in doorways, as if to show that she feels 'with her back to the wall'. The camera will linger on a particular aspect of her face, frequently her eyes, as if to show that 'lo sguardo della giovane cattura e coglie l'invisibile (o l'impossibile), ciò che nessuno vede; diviene il tramite tra il mondo dei vivi e quello dei morti'.<sup>77</sup> The depiction of Chiara's internal rebellion (which was also described, albeit briefly, in the book which inspired the film, *Il prigioniero* by Laura Braghetti with Paola Tavella) has been strongly attacked by some critics who have interpreted it as a sign of tendency towards forgiveness on the part of the director. In response to this criticism, Bellocchio has said he feels it is legitimate for him to adapt characters and situations freely from Braghetti's book and to distrust what is considered to be the official version of the facts, not so much for reasons of 'artistic licence' as for civil necessity: 'oggi c'è un'esigenza civile e morale, non solo artistica, di "tradire" la storia, nel senso di non subirla fatalmente'.<sup>78</sup>

Chiara's doubts and her gradual growth in awareness emerge through a number of exchanges with her companions ('ma non capisco perché dobbiamo ucciderlo; ma niente mi convince che sia giusto farlo. Posso dirlo?', 'Ma non si potrebbe rinviare un altro po'') and above all through the dream sequences. Her dreams form an important

<sup>77</sup> Alberto Soncini, 'Il sacrificio della ragione', *Cineforum*, Vol. XLIII, No. 429, November 2003, p. 2.

<sup>78</sup> *Buongiorno, notte*, Press Book, p. 7.

element of the film, suggesting what might have been rather than what was. In the first dream, Chiara imagines taking Moro by the hand and leading him towards the exit, but stopping herself on the threshold after having seen a group of policemen through the spy-hole (this is the one moment which could be interpreted as a reference to the so-called 'conspiracy theory'). The second dream alludes to an impossible happy ending: Moro gets up and, finding the door of his cell left open and his captors all asleep, walks out of the door of the apartment. We then see him walking down a road in the early morning in EUR, the modern suburb of Rome, smiling.<sup>79</sup> This is followed by a scene back in the *covo* where he is taken out to be killed, and then, after an end title, by archive footage of politicians and Pope Paul VI attending the memorial service for the real Aldo Moro, with a return to the fantasy walk to freedom in the very last shot of the film.

These dreams have the function of 'correcting' in fantasy what happened to Moro in reality and at the same time of clarifying the cause of Chiara's suffering. What has irritated some of the critics and the public about the film is perhaps the absence of those conventions which usually serve to introduce and mark out a dream episode, such as dissolves, soft focus, colour filters or a switch to black and white, and which 'le désignent sans ambiguïté'.<sup>80</sup> The dreams in the film show the 'sciogliersi dalla forma' of Chiara, her mask as it falls but which she reassumes on waking, acting as if her dreams did not belong to her. Chiara's 'double' is shown at this dream-like level which is then echoed by her 'double' life: employed at the library of the ministry where as a guardian of the rules she ensures that the regulations are respected by the users, while at

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<sup>79</sup> The walk in EUR might be an indirect reference to Pasolini, who lived there and who had described Moro as 'il meno implicato di tutti' in 'L'articolo delle lucciole' (see above, note 55).

<sup>80</sup> Jean-Daniel Gollut, *Conter les rêves. La narration de l'expérience onirique dans les oeuvres de la modernité*, Paris: José Corti, 1993, pp. 63-4. Gollut is talking about dreams in literature and thus refers to the indicators particular to written texts. In some sequences the beginning of Chiara's dream is however marked by a shot of her closing her eyes.

the apartment/hideout she acts to subvert the Law. At the moments in which she ‘dissolves from form’ she is able to be moved by the sight of Moro and recognize in him the human dimension rather than the political symbol to attack.

In the film, Bellocchio gives a particular emphasis to the theme of generations. This is expressed both through the relationship of conflict between the brigatisti and Moro, considered as the symbol of a capitalistic patriarchal system, and in the sequences dedicated to the memory of the Resistance, which represent the contradiction between their desire for continuity with the Resistance generation, their emulation of the revolutionary and liberationist ideologies of the left partisans, and their presumed betrayal of that generation through assassination and dehumanization. Several of the texts I shall analyse in the next chapter also illustrate political violence through this theme.

Tullio Masoni wrote of Bellocchio’s films that ‘i padri sono assenti e vi sono molte madri’.<sup>81</sup> In *Buongiorno, notte* we see something different: fathers are absent either by choice (one of the terrorists recounts how he has left his own child) or constraint (as in the case of Moro).<sup>82</sup> Although some critics have wanted to read in Moro the embodiment of the ‘father’ to kill, there are others, of the same generation as Bellocchio, such as Anna Calvelli, who have objected:

Personalmente non mi sento figlia di Moro, né credo che ci si senta la mia generazione che ha vissuto la ribellione nel Sessantotto e che ha avuto dei *maîtres à penser* di ben più alto spessore morale e intellettuale. Non credo neanche che si possa sentire figlia di Moro l’Italia di oggi, che a tutto guarda

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<sup>81</sup> Tullio Masoni ‘La luce quotidiana’, *Cineforum*, Vol. XLII, No. 415, June 2002, p. 4.

<sup>82</sup> Moro above all is a father-grandfather who is not able to be near his loved ones, who feels a strong sense of family and who tries to communicate to his family the tenderness and love he feels for them, above all his young grandson Luca.

tranne che alle più elementari regole del codice etico e che, anzi, ha elevato a norma di vita la legge del compromesso e del business.<sup>83</sup>

Bellocchio has said that he wanted to consider Moro as ‘un’identità forte con cui appunto dialogare, scontrarsi, dialettizzarsi’.<sup>84</sup>

The theme of the Resistance is tackled in the central scene of the film when Chiara goes to the cemetery with her relatives to commemorate the anniversary of the death of her father, a former partisan. The cemetery and the prayer ‘Eterno riposo’ seem to be used to show that those days and those ideals have finally slipped away (the light here is the ‘luce perpetua’ of ‘Eterno riposo’ which will return as hope, but not in this life). In contrast to this, in the scene at a restaurant immediately afterwards, are the words of a cheerful and nostalgic partisan, a friend of Chiara’s father, who says ‘Anche il tempo più lontano non dimentica il partigiano’ and then intones the song ‘Urla il vento’, which is picked up by a young married couple who also happen to be there. While the chorus of the young (even a child sings) and the old is perhaps designed to imply a possible continuity of ideals across the generations, Chiara remains silent and looks around her in confusion.

The reversal of perspective, the theme of the break in continuity of the tradition of resistance across the generations, continues when Chiara is given a letter by Moro to send to his wife. Moro is by now condemned and knows he will never see his family again. Chiara reads the letter and in Moro’s words of resignation and affection she recognizes the letters that the condemned partisans wrote to their wives. Bellocchio here

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<sup>83</sup> Anna Calvelli, ‘Dinamiche psicoanalitiche inesistenti’, *Cinema sessanta*, No. 5 - 273, September-October 2003, p. 14.

<sup>84</sup> E.A. (ed.), ‘Marco Bellocchio: le vie dell’inconscio e la libertà del sogno. A colloquio con il regista di *Buongiorno, notte*’ in *Duel*, No. 107, October 2003, p. 8.

inserts some scenes on the television set from the last episode of Rossellini's *Paisà* showing partisans condemned to die.<sup>85</sup> Braghetti writes:

Lessi alcune di quelle lettere. Mario non ce le nascondeva di certo. Erano terribili. Mio malgrado mi richiamavano alla mente quelle dei condannati a morte durante la resistenza, raccolte in un libro che mio padre teneva in casa e che avevo letto anche a scuola, versando lacrime di rabbia e domandandomi, talvolta, come mi sarei comportata in analoghe circostanze. Adesso il carceriere ero io. Non volevo pensarci. Non dovevo pensarci.<sup>86</sup>

There is a strong assimilation between Moro and the Resistance, judged by some critics to be excessive:

fra i Pink Floyd e i filmati in b/n dei partigiani uccisi, *aldilà* dell'effetto kitsch, senz'altro voluto per far capire che quella memoria storica va letta come 'soggettiva libera indiretta' di una ragazza degli anni Settanta, inequivocabilmente crea la metafora di un Moro partigiano, metafora *oseé* quanto quella del Berlusconi operaio.<sup>87</sup>

I do not think that Bellocchio wanted to show Moro as the direct heir of the Resistance in a political or ideological sense. I believe, rather, that he wanted to emphasize the figure of the man condemned to death for political reasons as well as his wish to oppose violence. On another level, the parallel between the evils perpetrated by the Nazis and Fascists of the Salò regime and those perpetrated by the terrorists might be intended to suggest a reflection on the nature of political killing. The killing of a person is still the killing of a person, regardless of the beliefs to which he or she subscribes, and there is no ideology that may be used simply to justify such an act. In the allusion to the

<sup>85</sup> At another point in the film there is another intracinematic allusion: during the séance (which actually took place) the politicians, trying to find where Moro is being held captive, invoke the spirit 'Bernardo': the place he indicates is 'la luna' ('the moon'), the title of Bertolucci's film of 1979.

<sup>86</sup> Anna Laura Braghetti and Paola Tavella, *Il prigioniero*, Milan: Feltrinelli, p. 108.

<sup>87</sup> Marcello Walter Bruno, 'Buongiorno, notte. Perché no', *Segnocinema*, Vol. 23, No. 124, November/December 2003, p. 60.



Resistance, rather than a ‘metafora *oseé*’, I see a hard historical judgement against those who present themselves as revolutionary liberators and yet end up as executioners believing that the end justifies the means. Furthermore in the scene from Rossellini of the murder of the partisans, pushed into the Po with their hands tied behind their backs and stones attached to their feet, one can see a clear metaphor of the Resistance betrayed in the present day:

immagini rosselliniane, secche, tragiche, definitive. La Resistenza finisce così, legata e annegata. (...) Il film termina con lo strazio di quei morti partigiani, sospesi tra acqua e cielo, con solo una sottile striscia di terra per vivere e poi morire.<sup>88</sup>

It is the woman who once again is the mediator between her present (not only factual but also emotional), the past (the Resistance) and the future which she tries to rectify in her dreams.

In the film, the exposure of the apparent lack of clear political motivation amongst the brigatisti seems to me to be a severe condemnation of political violence. However, as I have mentioned, some critics have accused Bellocchio of having adopted an attitude of forgiveness towards them. They claim he has shown their ‘human face’ and transmitted, albeit unwillingly, to the audience – in particular to young people who have not lived through these years – a story in which the cold ferocity of which the BR were capable has been obscured. In an article significantly called ‘La tentazione del perdono: cinema e terrorismo’, Aldo Torchio accuses Bellocchio’s film and Giordana’s *La meglio gioventù* (which I discuss in Chapter Three) ‘di rischiare di offrire allo spettatore una visione ingentilita, addolcita, stemperata dei personaggi che quei

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<sup>88</sup> Soncini, ‘Il sacrificio della ragione’, p. 7.

ruoli rivestivano in quegli anni'.<sup>89</sup> To underline his criticism, he quotes a young man's comment posted on the internet which he considered 'di una gravità inaudita'. It named among the merits of Bellocchio's and Giordana's films that of having demonstrated 'come i brigatisti in fin dei conti siano stati persone e non mostri, che credevano in quello che facevano, spinti da un ideale che in sé non era cattivo'.<sup>90</sup>

I repeat that I do not think that in showing the humanity of the brigatisti Bellocchio wanted to align himself on the side of forgiveness. Where he is more vulnerable to criticism is in his representation of a lack of reasons among the terrorists. To show them as apparently without motives for their actions, or at any rate not to depict their motives, is really to pass a harder judgement on them than a facile and stereotyped demonization. 'Stupisce tutti – anche me – constatare la normalità negli uomini e nelle donne armate, ma li riporta in una dimensione umana e non in quella di bestie assetate di sangue come l'immaginario collettivo le ha etichettate': in this comment, posted on another website, Torchiario sees the possibility of a 'confused homage' to the Red Brigades. But again I do not see this person's view as alarming because to 'show the human face' of a category of people who are criminals of various types does not amount to a wish to absolve them.<sup>91</sup> On the contrary, it seems to me to demonstrate the complexity of human nature. Hannah Arendt, watching Adolf Eichmann on trial for genocide in Jerusalem in 1961, observed that it is not only

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<sup>89</sup> Aldo Torchiario, 'La tentazione del perdono: cinema e terrorismo', *Italianieuropei. Bimestrale del Riformismo Italiano*, September-October 2003, p. 239.

<sup>90</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 242, 243.

<sup>91</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 243; as Bellocchio himself has stated, 'il film racconta anche la possibilità di un rapporto umano tra Moro e i suoi carcerieri, ma questa contraddizione non va scambiata con uno sguardo indulgente nei confronti dei terroristi', *Buongiorno notte* Press Book, p. 6.

monsters who do evil deeds but ‘normal’ men and women driven by their beliefs or by a mistaken sense of obedience or duty.<sup>92</sup>

I do not believe, then, that an appeal to the emotional sphere in a time of general crisis of reason can represent the winning card in favour of the terrorists. The lack of exploration of the motives of the *brigatisti* prevents the spectator from identifying with them. If there is any identification it is only really at an emotional or emotive level, not a political and ideological one. I believe that a genuine absolution would have to appeal to something shared not only on an emotional plane but above all on the rational one. And it is precisely this lack of rationality which ultimately unites *Buongiorno, notte* with other films which set out to represent the period of political violence of the 1970s in Italy. Once one eliminates the political-ideological dynamic which might have constituted the rational *sine qua non* of the group, there remains murder, pure and simple, without any possibility of justification.

To conclude on *Buongiorno, notte*, let us see, finally, how the film picks up the three basic motifs established in Sciascia’s text: the ‘dissolution of form’ (*sciogliersi dalla forma*), the relation between truth and literature, and the metaphor of light. In the first case Bellocchio aims to portray the dissolution not only of Moro’s ‘form’, his external and public identity, his ‘mask’, but also of Chiara’s. The dissolution of her form is, as we have seen, partial, limited to those moments in which she allows her own doubts on what she is doing to surface and in which she recognizes the humanity of her victim after having previously denied it. As for the second theme, it is interesting that the film creates a level of metatext or *mise-en-abyme* by drawing attention to the existence of a manuscript entitled *Buongiorno, notte*. This is mentioned for the first time

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<sup>92</sup> Hannah Arendt, *Eichmann in Jerusalem: A Report on the Banality of Evil*, Harmondsworth: Penguin 1976 (original English-language edition, New York: Viking Press, 1963), p. 25.

by the brigatisti when they open Moro's bags and later by Enzo (Paolo Briguglia), Chiara's colleague at the ministry, who has written a text called *Buongiorno, notte* which he wants her to read. The manuscript tells the story of a group of terrorists, amongst whom there is a woman, who have abducted a man. Enzo subsequently lets Chiara know that he has changed the ending. Whereas, in the first draft, the hostage is killed, in the new version the only woman terrorist in the group repents and opposes the logic of political killing 'perché di colpo ha orrore dell'assassinio. Perché non ci crede più. Anzi si infuria con se stessa per essere stata così cieca, così stupida e deve fare qualcosa'.

Chiara is upset by Enzo's story and manages only to reply that imagination has never been useful for anything – denying in the process one of the slogans of the time, 'l'immaginazione al potere!' – while he replies 'l'immaginazione è reale'. This statement might be taken as encapsulating the intentions of the director who, as we have seen, considers it legitimate to challenge the official version of events and who, like Enzo, wants to redeem the woman terrorist. In addition, there are connections here with two of Sciascia's reflections. The first is about the value of history 'as origin of reality'; the second, related to the first, is about the feeling 'che *L'affaire* Moro fosse già stato scritto',<sup>93</sup> an assertion that in turn calls to mind Ricoeur's reflections on how a literary work, a work of fiction,

is not a work without a reference, but a work with a split reference. i.e., a work whose ultimate reference has as its condition a suspension of the referential claim of conventional language. (...) both history and fiction refer to human action, although they do so on the basis of two different referential claims.<sup>94</sup>

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<sup>93</sup> Sciascia, *L'affaire Moro*, p. 27.

<sup>94</sup> Paul Ricoeur, 'Can Fictional Narratives Be True?' in *Analecta Husserliana. The Yearbook of Phenomenological Research*, Vol. XIV, 1983, p. 4.

Finally the last motif, that of light, is taken up in the name of Chiara, who represents the conscience of the group. The title of the film, itself, is an oxymoron inspired by Emily Dickinson's poem 'Good Morning – Midnight'.<sup>95</sup> Furthermore, the juxtaposition, day-night, which perhaps refers to the human condition, to the duplicity of the situation, brings to mind Magritte's paintings where houses by night, barely lit by internal light, are surrounded by bright daytime skies.

In this respect one of the initial sequences seems particularly interesting. Chiara appears in close-up while she is at home using a tanning lamp on her face. She has her curly hair tied back, eyes closed and covered by plastic sunglasses which protect her from the ultraviolet rays. Her face is completely offered up to the light but it is a false light, artificial, which risks blinding her and yet sheds no light around her. The background, in fact, remains immersed in darkness and her glasses have no lenses to help her see better. As at other moments in the film the scene draws on Laura Braghetti's account:

Per essere libera il giorno del sequestro, infatti, avevo chiesto quattro giorni di ferie, e raccontato a tutti che andavo a sciare a Pescasseroli. Scelsi Pescasseroli perché la conoscevo bene, e avrei potuto reggere senza difficoltà le chiacchiere al ritorno. E comperai una lampada a raggi Uva, per procurarmi un po' di abbronzatura.<sup>96</sup>

The curly hair which frames Chiara's face and her impassive expression recall the mythical Medusa. But she is an atypical Medusa, stripped in this instance of the petrifying power of her gaze. Or rather one could think of a latent petrifying power

<sup>95</sup> Emily Dickinson, *The Complete Poems*, London: Faber, 1975, p. 203.

<sup>96</sup> Braghetti and Tavella, *Il prigioniero*, p. 25.

because the woman is equipped with false eyes, blank, without humanity, motionless and, maybe because of that, still more powerful.

The contrast between light and shade is presented emblematically, even in the very first sequences of the film to which I have already referred: accompanied by the pompously courteous voice of the estate agent, a man and a woman are viewing an apartment that they claim to want to buy. They appear to us while they tour the anonymous bare rooms of the apartment, darkened by the lowered shutters. The obscurity of that apartment which becomes the hideout is the mental obscurity of the brigatisti but is also the obscurity in which we, the spectators of the film, are enveloped, together with the unsuspecting estate agent (the first word we hear spoken is his 'buongiorno'). And it is he who says 'vi apro le finestre, così vedete meglio', and who stresses with tragic irony the characteristics of the apartment 'sicuro da sguardi indiscreti (...) in una zona sicura'.

Light is a theme that also returns in the next sequence when Chiara and Primo in the apartment/hideout, enveloped in darkness, she asleep and he reading, are suddenly lit up by fireworks from the New Year celebrations. This is the first precise indication of time that we are given: we are at the beginning of 1978. The bangs of the fireworks are ironic forerunners of the shots we will hear at the conclusion of the film, which will signify the end of the incident and of Moro.<sup>97</sup> Finally, the motif of light reappears in the scene in which the neighbourhood priest rings the doorbell of the apartment/hideout to give the blessing. He belongs to the parish of Santa Lucia who, not by chance, is the patron saint of sight. Chiara, finding herself in front of the unexpected priest and altar-

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<sup>97</sup> Another powerful moment of tragic irony is when the voice of a young Jonny Dorelli, the television presenter, wishes everyone a happy new year ('buon anno') and less crime.

boy, faints. It is another moment of tragic irony: the priest thinks she is pregnant and hastens to assure her that they will meet again for the baptism of the newborn infant.

**Three theatre pieces: *Corpo di Stato*, *L'ira del sole*, *Aldo Moro: une tragédie italienne***

Marco Baliani's *Corpo di Stato. Il delitto Moro: una generazione divisa* and *L'ira del sole. Un 9 di maggio* by Antonio Maria Di Fresco and Maria Fida Moro figure in this part of the chapter as representations of Moro's imprisonment from the 'outside'. They are both examples of 'teatro della parola' or 'teatro della narrazione' as opposed to 'teatro di rappresentazione'. In other words, they are strongly 'spoken' rather than action-based performances, the self-narratives of two people – Maria Fida Moro and Baliani – who are near-contemporaries but who, in their respective paths through life and experiences, are very different. At the time of the abduction, Baliani was twenty-eight, had been a father for a year and had been involved in the theatre for four years.<sup>98</sup> His is a subjective account of Moro's days of imprisonment, that of the representative of a young generation who, in the seventies, were active in leftist groups but did not support the armed struggle. Baliani wanted to oppose the hegemony of images which are 'spesso banali, piatte e oggettivate dallo schermo' by reconstructing the Moro case through an oral account.<sup>99</sup> His words are those of a witness who specifically prefers words to pictures and wants to turn the spectator into a listener. Maria Fida Moro, the elder daughter of Aldo Moro, was thirty in 1978 with a three-year old son. Her narration is absolutely personal. She does not put herself forward as a representative or a

<sup>98</sup> Marco Baliani, *Corpo di Stato*, p. 17.

<sup>99</sup> Patrizia Bologna, 'Il viaggiatore incantato', *Primafila*, no. 113, May 2005, p. 61.

spokeswoman either for a generation or for her own family. She wants to relate her pain, her own personal tragedy. The two works, therefore, despite having in common the narrated form and the fact that they were both produced for the twentieth anniversary of Moro's death, are fundamentally different in content. Baliani speaks of the tragedy of a generation, Maria Fida Moro of a personal tragedy.

Baliani, starting with his title, in which he plays on the words 'corpo'/'colpo', carries forward the interest in the 'body of the victim' that he had shown in *L'Antigone delle città* and *Antigoni della terra*, performed in Bologna respectively in August 1991 and August 1992 to mark the eleventh and twelfth anniversaries respectively of the bomb massacre at the railway station in 1980.<sup>100</sup> In the former, he directed a hundred actors and actresses who played the victims of the massacre: the hundred bodies, after having danced frenetically, lay tumbled all over a hill of earth which had been created in the square. On that occasion, the myth of Antigone was inverted and the body of Polyneices multiplied. The body of the 'victim', reduced to a 'thing', is the central motif also in *Corpo di Stato*, which recalls the body not only of Moro but also of Peppino Impastato. Both were discovered on 9 May 1978 – the one a victim of the Red Brigades, the other of the Mafia. Baliani seems to suggest another similarity between the two when they were alive: both had known their assassins and both had understood that their words of accusation and in search of help – Moro's from the Prigione del Popolo, Impastato's from Radio Aut – would lead them to their death. Both faced a preordained death, tragic because it was impossible to oppose a superior malign will 'come se

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<sup>100</sup> Comitato di solidarietà alle vittime delle stragi, *Antigone delle città o dell'insepoltura del corpo del fratello*, first performed outdoors (Bologna city centre) on 1 August 1991, directed by Marco Baliani, produced by Valerio Festi and Monica Maimone, script by Franco Fortini, Gianni D'Elia, Franco Loi. *Antigoni della terra* was performed only once, on 1 August 1992, and commemorated five massacres: Piazza Fontana, Milan (12 December 1969), Piazza della Loggia, Brescia (28 May 1974), the train Italicus between Florence and Bologna (4 August 1974); the DC9 passenger plane over Ustica (27 June 1980); Bologna railway station (2 August 1980).



eseguisse un ordine del Destino, e allora la vittima deve essere proprio così, inerme, in canottiera, magari con ancora un barlume di fiducia negli occhi'.<sup>101</sup> Baliani relates how the assassins of both Moro and Impastato wanted to reduce their victims to a 'thing' by dehumanizing them and by erasing their human face to make them become symbols to be attacked.

Despite his awareness of this mechanism now, Baliani confessed to having felt a stirring of enthusiasm at the time when he heard about Moro's abduction:

in quei primi istanti fui preso da un senso di eccitazione, una specie di euforia. Lo so che potrei raccontare tutt'altro, non ci vuole molto, col senno di poi potrei dire che all'annuncio della radio provai sdegno, che condannai immediatamente l'azione delle Brigate Rosse. No, non è vero, non andò così. Provai un senso di esaltazione. Come era possibile? Io ero sempre stato lontano dai metodi di lotta delle Brigate rosse, non ero mai stato troppo convinto che lotta rivoluzionaria e lotta armata dovessero per forza coincidere, e in quelle forme poi, no di certo. (...) come era possibile che all'annuncio radiofonico del rapimento io provassi quel senso euforico di appartenenza? (...) E non fui il solo a essere preso da quel senso di eccitazione.<sup>102</sup>

*Corpo di Stato* is not a search for the truth. Baliani does not investigate or delve into judicial matters but concentrates on what he experienced and thought during the 55 days of Moro's captivity. He takes up the theme of the relationship between fathers and sons, putting forward the hypothesis that the history of armed resistance could also be told as a history of conflict between generations:

A volte mi sembra che questa storia si potrebbe raccontare anche in un altro modo, come uno scontro tra padri e figli. Leggendo con attenzione la bibliografia dei terroristi, si scopre che soprattutto all'inizio della lotta armata, la maggior parte di loro proviene dalla tradizione comunista di fabbrica, dalle sezioni di partito, da famiglie antifasciste, partigiane. Oppure dal cattolicesimo estremo, dal cristianesimo militante. Vengono da due grandi Chiese. Ma d'altra parte non

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<sup>101</sup> Baliani, *Corpo di Stato*, p. 13.

<sup>102</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 19.

serve forse una grande fede, per arrivare a uccidere un uomo in nome di un più alto ideale di giustizia? Forse la nostra, in quegli anni, fu una gioventù con troppo Dio, sì, troppa fede, e i padri ne ebbero paura, chiusero le porte al dialogo, al confronto, forse perché coi nostri atteggiamenti gli ricordavamo cosa erano stati loro solo vent'anni prima. Ci fu muro contro muro. E i figli per farsi ascoltare si misero a gridare sempre di più, fino all'urlo sparato dalle armi. Non so, sarebbe un modo di raccontare la stessa storia. Un modo per poter capire, ad esempio perché uno come me, (...) fosse ripreso da quel senso di eccitazione rivoluzionaria.<sup>103</sup>

In the light of these considerations Moro's abduction was felt as the tragedy of the generation of those who, pushed to take up arms in an attempt to fight against injustice, instead ended up taking on the role of executioners. Baliani's monologue aims to be a personal and generational account and also an instrument for the transmission of an experience to the next generation. Indeed, the main reason why Baliani decided to stage *Corpo di Stato* for the twentieth anniversary of Moro's death 'Non era commemorare, ma "far storia" (...)'.<sup>104</sup>

The play was performed for the first time in Rome amid the ruins of Trajan's Markets, without any stage, at the same level as the audience, 'senza piani rialzati, come raccontare tra i resti, tra i pezzi di un mondo che non c'è più':

Alle mie spalle un muro in tufo sbrecciato, alla mia sinistre colonne di un tempio che poi scopriremo per ironia essere un tempio alla Giustizia. Sopra il muro alle mie spalle si lascia intuire il piano di un'altra città: il tema delle due città, quella visibile e quella interiore, sarà al centro del racconto.<sup>105</sup>

At the Teatro dell'Elfo in Milan, where I saw it performed on 16 March 2005, the set consisted only of a single chair. In the centre of the stage, Baliani talked uninterruptedly for about an hour and half with the help of a very few photographs.<sup>106</sup>

<sup>103</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 22, 23.

<sup>104</sup> Provvedini, 'Teatro e Tv'.

<sup>105</sup> Baliani, *Corpo di Stato*, p. 82.

<sup>106</sup> Silvia Fumarola, 'Caso Moro, i dubbi di una generazione', *la Repubblica*, 8 May 1998.

*L'ira del sole* is also a one-act play, and it lasts just under an hour. Maria Fida Moro and Antonio Maria Di Fresco wanted to write it for the twentieth anniversary of Moro's death. The performance was announced at a press conference in Palermo on 16 March 1998 and it took place 55 days later on 9 May at the Teatro Biondo Stabile in Palermo. On the stage Maria Fida Moro was dressed in pink 'per dare il senso della gioia perduta' (Fig. 5) and, in an imaginary dialogue, she talked to her father who replied with the voice of the director Antonio Raffaele Addamo. The private and individual nature of the memory was accentuated by the projection of private unpublished photographs of Moro, by himself and with his nephew Luca, Maria Fida's son, who was present on stage and who wrote the music for the play (Fig. 6). To the chiefly private dimension of the act of remembering was added a public one, provided by the presence of five men who had 'la funzione che aveva il coro nel teatro greco, sono vestiti di grigio, hanno il volto quasi completamente dipinto di bianco, per dare l'idea dell'evanescenza e della morte', and who were evidently intended to evoke Moro's bodyguards.<sup>107</sup>

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<sup>107</sup> Unless otherwise indicated, the quotations from Maria Fida Moro are from my interview with her in Rome on 4 May 2005.



Fig. 5. *L'ira del sole. Un 9 di maggio* by Antonio Maria Di Fresco and Maria Fida Moro. Photograph courtesy of Maria Fida Moro.

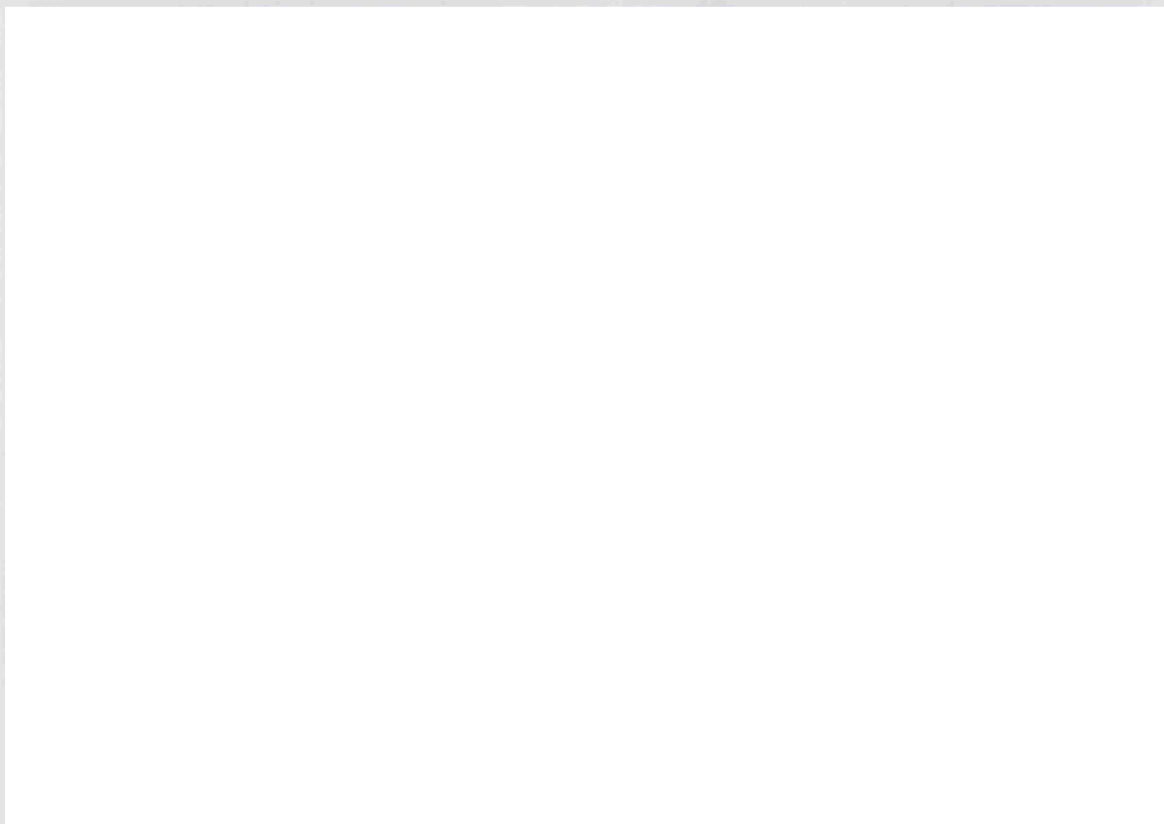


Fig. 6. Luca Moro playing guitar in front of a photograph of himself with his grandfather in *L'ira del sole. Un 9 di maggio* by Antonio Maria Di Fresco and Maria Fida Moro. Photograph courtesy of Maria Fida Moro.

Unfortunately, no ‘professional’ video recording of any of the performances was made, despite the fact that the play toured for nearly two years – at l’Arena del Sole in Bologna, the Teatro Antico in Taormina, the Eliseo in Rome and at the European Parliament in Brussels – and was well received by critics and the public. Maria Fida Moro let me see photographs of the production and an amateur video, but it was her own account that has been most useful for an understanding of the nature of the play:

ho recuperato delle foto che sono state proiettate e che prendevano soffitto sfondo e pavimento e noi recitavamo dentro queste foto, di grande impatto emotivo. Non c’erano pause. Sulla scena c’eravamo sempre io e Luca, c’erano dei pannelli di plexiglass su ruote che venivano mossi dai cinque ragazzi e poi un muro di tre facce, un prisma, che aveva un lato plumbeo, uno luminoso argenteo e uno quasi invisibile. (...) Lo spettacolo si chiudeva con un’ultima foto che avevo scattato a papà il 15 marzo con Luca (...) mentre si vede questa foto si sentono leggere due stralci di lettera di papà a Luca che cammina verso lo sfondo, io lo raggiungo e poi ci prendiamo per mano. Lo sfondo diventa tutto rosso, poi buio, poi scoppiavano gli applausi.

In the words of Maria Fida Moro, *L’ira del sole* aimed above all to be a ‘rappresentazione rispettosa e amorevole (...) perché solo conoscendo la vita di un uomo come mio padre si può raccontare la sua morte’. It was a homage to the memory of her father alive but also the opportunity ‘di gridare un dolore antico e sempre nuovo mentre è concesso ad altri di mercificarlo con una scena usurpata’.<sup>108</sup> It also allowed her to express herself on a subject which everyone seemed to be discussing but on which, as she put it, the only people who were not listened to and had limited opportunities for expressing themselves were the members of Moro’s family. In some passages of the text this anger shows clearly and it transforms the intimate tone of the reminiscence into a ‘j’accuse’: ‘Perduti, abbandonati, traditi, calunniati, insultati, irrisi: l’avevi predetta,

<sup>108</sup> Antonio Maria Di Fresco and Maria Fida Moro, *L’ira del sole. Un 9 di maggio*, Palermo: Teatro Biondo Stabile di Palermo, p. 23.

papà, questa tragica sorte. Ciò che temevi è stato. Orgoglio, dignità, speranza, amore feriti a morte'.<sup>109</sup> *L'ira del sole* does not illustrate the 55 days of Moro's captivity. Rather, it is a self-narrative of one who suffered, and continues to suffer indirectly, the effects of those 55 days. Although unique, the text recalls Sciascia's for the portrayal it gives of Moro 'the man' without his political mask, 'sciolto dalla forma', not squeezed into the mystified role of the 'statesman'.

*Aldo Moro: une tragédie italienne*, although it focuses on the 55 days of captivity, also makes use of images from Martinelli's film (to be discussed in the next section) which instead is based on the conspiracy theory and the massacre in Via Fani. I saw it performed on 12 March 2005 at the Italian Institute of Culture in Paris. The script is by Corrado Augias and Vladimiro Polchi and the production and direction by Giorgio Ferrara. Gianni Silvestri's innovative stage design was particularly interesting. There was a double-sided stage in the centre of the room with the audience seated on either side. A dense but see-through metallic mesh was suspended from the ceiling on either side of the stage. In this way, the audience could see the stage but not the other spectators on the far side of it. In the centre of the stage, tall vertical transparent panels 'opened' out onto a confined area of glass, a transparent box, inside which was Moro (Paul Barge) (Fig. 7):

La contrapposizione tra l'isolamento di Moro (...) e l'acceso dibattito che si svolge nella società è sottolineata anche dal dispositivo scenico ideato da Gianni Silvestri, grazie ad un'essenziale struttura metallica che evoca la minuscola prigione entro cui è rinchiuso quasi immobile il prigioniero.  
(...) Sfruttando drammaticamente l'opposizione dentro/fuori, la pièce evoca tutte le fasi dei drammatici cinquantacinque giorni.<sup>110</sup>

<sup>109</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 23.

<sup>110</sup> Fabio Gambaro, 'In scena i 55 giorni del sequestro Moro', *la Repubblica*, 21 February 2005.



Fig. 7. Paul Barge as Moro in *Aldo Moro: une tragédie italienne* by Giorgio Ferrara. Photograph courtesy of Italian Institute of Culture, Paris.

To me, the set and the accompanying audio-visual material of various types appear to allude to the multiplicity of viewpoints that the Moro case has attracted over twenty-seven years. I do not believe, however, that the play is able to ‘multiplier les points de vue sur le drame’<sup>111</sup> or to provide ‘il maggior numero di dati possibili perché possano conoscere [i francesi] vari punti di vista e linguaggi di una tragedia italiana’,<sup>112</sup> as the director claims, or that it can be considered a piece of ‘théâtre documentaire’.<sup>113</sup> The title has echoes of nationalistic rhetoric which does not seem appropriate to the Moro case, given that, whether one supports the theory of a state conspiracy or that of the

<sup>111</sup> Agnès Santi, ‘Une Tragédie italienne. Aldo Moro’, *La Terrasse. Le Journal des arts vivants en Île-de-France*, No. 126, March 2005.

<sup>112</sup> Claudia Provvedini, ‘Metto in scena il delitto Moro per i francesi’, *Corriere della Sera*, 12 February 2005.

<sup>113</sup> Jean-Marc Stricker, ‘Untitled review of *Aldo Moro: une tragédie italienne*, *Chronique Théâtre*, 27 February 2005.

ideological purity of the brigatisti, the Moro case is the manifestation of an internal *division* in the country.

Furthermore, if it really had been perceived as an ‘Italian’ tragedy’, the result would have been different: probably more voices would have been raised in favour of his liberation, even from the people, that ‘popolo italiano’, to which the title implicitly refers. Instead, there were no demonstrations for his release, as far as I am aware, or other forms of popular pressure which could justify, even in part, this adjective.<sup>114</sup>

The story of Moro’s abduction and assassination is related through his letters, read in French by Paul Barge, who plays Moro as an aggressive and desperate man – characteristics that have never emerged either in private or public descriptions of Moro – and through the comments of Fabrice Josso, who plays a ‘choral’ narrator.<sup>115</sup> The latter introduces facts – through the reading of passages from Sciascia’s *L’affaire Moro*, articles from newspapers of the time, and extracts from the Red Brigades’ communiqués – and poses questions that are chiefly about the behaviour of the representatives of the state and the interpretation of Moro’s letters. The two players do not interact, but alternate. However, Moro’s story is not recounted only through these texts but also through images. Some of these are archive images of RAI television news broadcasts by Bruno Vespa, others are from *Buongiorno, notte* and *Piazza delle Cinque Lune*, which are projected in succession on the vertical mesh panels on either side of the stage. The types of material used, therefore, are very varied, not just because written and visual

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<sup>114</sup> It is difficult not to recall here, by contrast, the demonstrations organized in Italy in 2004 and 2005 to aim to persuade the government to abandon its line of intransigence and obtain at all costs the liberation of Simona Pari, Simona Torretta and Giuliana Sgrena, Italians abducted in Iraq. In this case, it now seems clear that, despite its official position, the Berlusconi government was prepared secretly to negotiate, through the Red Cross, an exchange of prisoners. In August 2005 it was revealed that “‘four alleged [Iraqi] terrorists” under blankets and boxes of medicines in a jeep and an ambulance’ of the Italian Red Cross had been returned to Iraq in order to free Simona Pari and Simona Torretta, the two young Italian women held as hostages. See Barbara McMahon, ‘Italian Red Cross admits Iraq hostage deal’, *The Guardian*, 26 August 2005.

<sup>115</sup> Provedini, ‘Metto in scena il delitto Moro per i francesi’.



sources are mixed but above all because some of the materials are ‘fictional’ (the feature films) while others (Sciascia’s text and Moro’s letters) are not, some are ‘tendentious’, used as mouthpieces for the conspiracy theory, while others concentrate mostly on the Red Brigades. The result is a hybrid text which does not take a clear position in the debate on whether the abduction was orchestrated ‘from above’ and by whom. Thus, overall, the play restricts itself to being merely an assemblage of the best-known representations inspired by the Moro affair, a series of ‘quotations’ both of the texts dealing with the captivity (from Moro’s letters and Sciascia’s text to Bellocchio’s film), and of those about the massacre of Via Fani (through the extracts from Martinelli’s film).

In the texts analysed in this part of the chapter, we have seen, then, various representations of Moro’s 55 days of imprisonment that have been influenced in different ways by Sciascia’s *L’affaire Moro*. Traces of this fundamental ‘template’ text can be discerned both when the perspective is within the hideout (*Buongiorno, notte*; *Aldo Moro: une tragédie italienne*) and when it is ‘external’ and is constituted by the effects of the abduction outside the hideout (*Corpo di Stato*, *L’ira del sole*). Let us now turn our attention to the second group of representations, those that focuses on the presentation of the conspiracy theory and, in particular, on the massacre in Via Fani.

## 1.4 Conspiracy theories

### Moro and Kafka

Moro could be likened to Josef K., the protagonist of Kafka’s *The Trial*, with the difference that Moro was seized by surprise twice: once by the Red Brigades (was he

not, in Pasolini's words, 'il meno implicato di tutti'?) and once by the Law, or the state (his friends in the party and the men of government who turned their backs on him). In Orson Welles's film version of *The Trial* (*Le Procès*, 1962) (which has some significant differences from Kafka's novel, as Slavoj Žižek has pointed out) the lawyer joins Josef K. (Anthony Perkins) and the priest in the cathedral and advises him to plead insanity.<sup>116</sup> Before leaving the cathedral Josef K., who has not accepted the lawyer's proposal, 'sostiene che la vera cospirazione (del potere) consiste nel tentativo di persuadere soggetti di essere vittime di imperscrutabili forze irrazionali. Che ogni cosa è folle, che il mondo è assurdo e privo di senso'.<sup>117</sup> Then two plainclothes policemen take him to a building site and blow him up.

Moro and Josef K. did *not* agree to be considered mad. Moro writes in one of his letters 'io sono prigioniero e non sono in uno stato d'animo lieto. Ma non ho subito nessuna coercizione, non sono drogato, scrivo con il mio stile per brutto che sia, ho la mia solita calligrafia'.<sup>118</sup> Žižek maintains that in Welles' film Josef K. is killed because '*rappresenta una minaccia per il potere nel momento in cui smaschera, "vede attraverso" la fiction su cui è fondato il legame sociale del potere costituito.*'<sup>119</sup> Welles seems to give this 'conspiracy' against Josef K., according to Žižek, a double value:

come K. indica nella versione di Welles dell'esplosione finale la vera cospirazione del potere risiede nella stessa nozione di cospirazione, nella nozione di un qualche misterioso organismo che 'tira le fila' ed è effettivamente l'ispiratore di tutto, cioè nella nozione secondo la quale, dietro il potere pubblico, visibile, ci sia un'altra oscena, invisibile, 'folle' struttura di potere.

<sup>116</sup> Slavoj Žižek, *Il Grande altro. Nazionalismo, godimento, cultura di massa*, Milan: Feltrinelli, 1999, p. 13. The text has not been published in English, but similar subject matter may be found in Žižek's article 'Why Does the Law Need an Obscene Supplement', in Peter Goodrich and David Gray Carlson (eds), *Law and the Postmodern Mind: Essays on Psychoanalysis and Jurisprudence*, Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan Press, 1998, pp. 75-97.

<sup>117</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 13, 14.

<sup>118</sup> Quoted in Sciascia, *L'affaire Moro*, p. 109; also in Moro, *Ultimi scritti*, p. 32 (the letter was received by *Il Messaggero* on 30 April and published in the Italian press on 1 May).

<sup>119</sup> Žižek, *Il Grande altro*, p. 14; italics in original.

Quest'altra legge nascosta farebbe la parte dell' 'Altro dell'Altro' in senso lacaniano, la parte di metagaranzia della corenza del 'Grande Altro' (l'ordine simbolico che regola la vita sociale). La teoria della cospirazione fornisce una garanzia che il campo del Grande Altro non è un inconsistente bricolage: la sua premessa di fondo è che, dietro al dittatore [Master] pubblico (che naturalmente è un impostore), vi sia un dittatore nascosto che tiene realmente tutto sotto controllo. I regimi totalitari erano abili specialmente nel coltivare il mito di un potere parallelo, segreto e invisibile, e per questa stessa ragione onnipotente, un tipo di 'organizzazione nell'organizzazione' (...) che compensi l'evidente inefficienza del potere pubblico e legale, e così assicuri il tranquillo operare della macchina sociale; e questo mito non è in alcun modo sovversivo, ma funge da definitivo supporto del potere.<sup>120</sup>

We need to make clear that there was in reality in Italy a kind of 'state behind the state', one structured with a military command and a rank and file composed of civilians who had secret but real powers. Amongst its members was Gladio, considered by some to have been the operational instrument of the strategy of tension, the secret services and the P2 Masonic Lodge. It seems accurate in this case, therefore, to speak of a second, invisible state which guarantees the operation of the visible one and which compensates for its lapses and weaknesses. On this subject, Jacqueline Rose claims that the concepts of 'state' and 'fantasy' are not antagonistic but that fantasy itself has an important role in the construction of a modern state because it 'enacts its authority as ghostly, fantasmatic, authority. But it would be wrong to deduce from this (...) that the state is any the less real for that'.<sup>121</sup>

With these reflections, I want to introduce this part of the chapter dealing with those representations that attempt to bring to the fore the involvement of this double state in Moro's abduction (*Lato destro, Piazza delle Cinque Lune* do so in an explicit

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<sup>120</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 15.

<sup>121</sup> Jacqueline Rose, *States of Fantasies*, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1996, p. 9.

manner). This involvement has become known as the 'tesi del complotto' and it is part of what is referred to in Italian as 'dietrologia', that is to say a view which interprets

la storia d'Italia, dal dopoguerra fino alla vittoria elettorale, nel 1996, del PDS, oggi DS ed ex PCI, (...) come la trama di un 'doppio Stato': l'uno corrotto e con propaggini occulte, che ha criminalmente detenuto il potere nella prima Repubblica; l'altro leale e legale che avrebbe fatto da baluardo al sovversivismo atavico delle classi dominanti.<sup>122</sup>

Paradoxically, if one accepts this account it means that one may come to see both Moro and the Red Brigades as *victims* of a plot. Such a view will either not recognize, or will see as of marginal importance, the political character of the latter and will see them instead as 'pawns' in the hands of that ambiguous Doppelgänger of state power. Some of the former protagonists of the armed struggle, now exiled in Paris, claim that to adopt such a view means

voler nascondere il carattere politico del nemico (...) uno degli aspetti maggiori delle politiche controrivoluzionarie moderne.(...) fin dall'inizio il movimento italiano degli anni settanta è stato protagonista di una rivoluzione negata, una *rivoluzione occultata*, e le figure sociali che vi presero parte (...) apparvero da subito come il *nemico inconfessabile*.<sup>123</sup>

I do not consider it accurate to see the Red Brigades as manipulated pawns. In the same way as Josef K.'s lawyer offers him the role of martyr/victim of a secret conspiracy, so 'L'oscuro miraggio dell'altro potere' brings to our attention a 'spazio fantasmatico'. In the Moro case we are thus dealing with two co-present but mutually incompatible narratives: on the one hand the thesis of dark plots, of the 'tela del ragno', as Sergio Flamigni, the chief exponent of 'dietrologia' has called it, evidence of the double power which seems to explain and throw light on how the abduction and detention of Moro

<sup>122</sup> Persichetti and Scalzone, *Il nemico inconfessabile*, p. 7.

<sup>123</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 8, 9.

were possible; on the other hand the narrative of what I would call the ‘paradox of justice’, given that the identification of those possibly responsible does not lead to a

rivelazione pubblica delle reali cospirazioni, dei casi di corruzioni ecc.; l’efficienza della logica fantasmatica della cospirazione richiede che il nemico rimanga un’entità imprecisabile la cui vera identità non può mai venire completamente rivelata.<sup>124</sup>

If one accepts the theory that the abduction was managed by obscure entities and institutions, the fact that they were never punished only reinforces their power. Aldo Moro is first a victim *of* the Red Brigades, then, subsequently, he finds himself the victim of this conspiracy *together with* the Red Brigades, although in a different way. The fiction of Moro as victim is superimposed on that of the Red Brigades as victims – the one is victim of his ‘friends in the party’, the others are victims of a comrade who has infiltrated and manipulated the group. In this way, it is as if the Red Brigades naively rebelled against the visible and public symbol of authority but in so doing played the game of the ‘misterioso doppio dell’autorità pubblica’ which acts in the shadows and which specifically ‘irradia una specie di onnipotenza spettrale, fantasmatica’, ‘un indistruttibile corpo estraneo che rappresenta la sostanza vitale presimbolica, un nauseabondo muco parassita che invade il mio interno e mi domina’.<sup>125</sup> David Moss has described Moro’s abduction as a ‘ritual’ and has identified a similar mechanism:

subordinate rituals in liberal democracies may in fact work to strengthen some of the values on which the dominant order itself rests: the appeal to wide popular support, strong public commitment to a policy or programme and the display of

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<sup>124</sup> Žižek, *Il Grande altro*, p. 15.

<sup>125</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 24, 25.

personal concern in actions intended for the common good points to principles on which dominant groups' own authority is claimed to rest.<sup>126</sup>

The works I shall analyse in this part of the chapter also show similarities with Greek tragedy: not so much in this case in the portrayal of Moro as tragic hero – although he appears indirectly as such in *Piazza delle Cinque Lune* – as in their representation of the forces which control the abduction and which appear like fate in tragedy, ineluctable and implacable. The texts here differ from those in the first part of the chapter because they are 'tendentious' or 'a tesi': *Piazza delle Cinque Lune* and *Lato destro* both concentrate on the mysteries of the massacre in Via Fani and both are inspired by Flamigni's theories; *Amici e nemici* opens with a description of the massacre as 'manipulated' by subversive right-wing forces and then continues with a description of the days of Moro's imprisonment and of a parallel abduction; and finally *Il caso Moro*, again starting from the dramatization of the massacre, tries to shed light on international complicity.<sup>127</sup>

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<sup>126</sup> David Moss, 'The Kidnapping and Murder of Aldo Moro', *Archives Européennes de Sociologie*, Vol. XXII, No. 2, 1981, pp. 275-6.

<sup>127</sup> As a curiosity it is worth mentioning an interesting text, which describes itself as 'journalistic', called 'Dio salvi il Presidente' by Pier Francesco Pingitore, which originally appeared in the appendix to an anthology with the title *Il Bagaglino* (the name of the right-wing theatre group of which this was a collection of satirical texts). No date of publication is given but only the name of the printer, Arti grafiche Aldina, and the director responsible, Raffaello della Bona. However, the volume can be dated to between 1966 and 1969. The text describes the scenario of a possible attack on Aldo Moro. Although Pier Francesco Pingitore has denied any connection with Avanguardia Nazionale and with the milieu of the secret services, both the Ansa journalist, Paolo Cucchiarelli, who rediscovered the text and the journalist, Gianni Barbacetto, who decided to republish it in *Diario* in 1998 ('L'uomo che doveva morire', Vol. 3, No. 20, 20 May 1998), are convinced that it is not simply a coincidence. The precision of the facts and the scenario it describes seems to constitute a bleak warning: 'È al sicuro la vita del Presidente Moro? È ben vigilata la sua incolumità personale? Vengono adottate tutte le misure necessarie a preservare la sua persona da possibili attentati? (...) Pensare in quale disordine, in quale caos, in quale baratro sarebbe domani gettato il Paese se il gesto di un esaltato, di un sovversivo, di un pazzo privasse il Governo del suo Capo! (...) Questo servizio giornalistico si prefigge appunto lo scopo di cooperare alla vigilanza, illustrando i meriti e le lacune del servizio di sicurezza che veglia giorno e notte sull'incolumità del Presidente'. Pingitore follows this with the description of several potential ambushes, presenting them as 'possible traps' for Moro, given the repetition 'cronometrico dei suoi [di Moro] movimenti, ogni giorno, nel tragitto casa-chiesa-casa-palazzo Chigi'.

### *Piazza delle Cinque Lune*

*Piazza delle Cinque Lune*, released in cinemas in 2003, was written, directed and produced by Renzo Martinelli. It deals with the abduction of Moro but it is completely different from Bellocchio's and Ferrara's films in both form and content. It is a thriller, set in the present, which tells the story of Rosario Saracini (Donald Sutherland), the elderly chief prosecutor of Siena who is about to retire and who is sent anonymously an amateur Super8 cinefilm. The faded images which Saracini immediately projects on the wall of his apartment show the ambush in Via Fani and the capture of Moro. The magistrate is profoundly shaken by what he sees because it completely departs from the version given by Morucci and Moretti, the main planners and executors of the ambush.

Martinelli's idea of using a text, in this case a piece of film, presented within the fiction as real, as a trigger to memory and historical inquiry is reminiscent of the device of the invented historical manuscript in *I promessi sposi*. Yet, whereas in Manzoni's novel the discovery and purported transcription of the manuscript was a pretext which at once limited and justified the author's omniscience, in Martinelli's film the faked Super8 films serves as an impetus to new knowledge. Martinelli got the idea after reading a statement made to a journalist by Licio Gelli, master of the P2 Masonic lodge: 'Lei non sarà così ingenuo da pensare che delle persone maniache della documentazione come le BR non abbiano filmato il più clamoroso sequestro di questo secolo?'.<sup>128</sup> After having shot several takes of the ambush scene, Martinelli realized it was not possible to represent or repeat it as the brigatisti had described it and he came to the conclusion that their accounts must have been inexact.<sup>129</sup> His Super8 clip consequently shows a version

<sup>128</sup> Renzo Martinelli, *Piazza delle Cinque Lune. Il thriller del caso Moro*, Rome: Gremese, 2003, p. 9.

<sup>129</sup> In Morucci's testimony the Fiat 128 driven by Moretti entered Via Fani heading towards the intersection with Via Stresa where, breaking suddenly, it crashed into the Fiat 130 containing Moro and his chief bodyguard, Leonardi, as well as the Alfetta containing the other bodyguards. Morucci speaks of a repeated bumping of their car by the driver of the Fiat 130 in his attempt to pull out towards the right.

of the ambush which accords with that reconstructed and promoted by Flamigni and posits the presence of a 'lone hitman' shooting from the right, while the other brigatisti come out from a hedge to the left of the cars.<sup>130</sup> Only by the addition of this fifth killer, it appears, can one explain some of the inconsistencies which otherwise would remain unresolved (as we shall see, Gianluca Floris in his play *Lato destro* actually invents a biography of this fifth man). The questions posed by Martinelli, via the old magistrate, are about the omissions in the brigatisti's account. Why did they never mention the presence of this killer? Who do they still want to cover up for, even after more than a quarter of a century? Who shot from the right?

The Super8 film, moreover, as we have suggested, also leads inevitably to a reflection on the relationship between truth and history. In the face of a complex event marked by deception and mystery, by falsehoods or alleged falsehoods, Martinelli decides to show another version of the facts which is both more credible, in his view, and more submerged, using a film which is, in its turn, false, a fake he himself has created. In this way he may also want to make us reflect on the nature of the images we consume every day and the deception we risk undergoing, and the recurrent images of television screens in his film (as in *Buongiorno, notte* and *Il caso Moro*) might also allude to this. The technique he used for the fake film of the ambush and massacre was to shoot it from a third-floor balcony overlooking Via Fani and then, via a 'degradation'

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Martinelli, after trying to film various scenes with his actors based on this version, says he realized there were many things that did not fit together. In the first place, the version of the bumping recounted by the *brigatisti* did not seem to stand up: a test with stuntmen showed that, even if one keeps the brake hard on, a Fiat 128, when repeatedly bumped, can easily be pushed forward. Moreover, the photographs taken after the ambush do not show signs of bumping: the front of the 130 is intact as is the rear of the 128. In other words, the bumping theory put forward by Moretti and Morucci appears to collapse. In the second place, if it is true that, after the bumping, the bodyguards were killed by machine-gun fire from the left side, how is it that Leonardi, who was sitting in the 130 next to Moro, was shot from the right? Martinelli, *Piazza delle Cinque Lune*, pp. 38, 39.

<sup>130</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 42.



of the image, which otherwise would have been too clean and thus unrealistic, to add fuzzy outlines, moisture stains and a few jumps between frames.

*Piazza delle Cinque Lune* continues with the meeting between Saracini and the mysterious man (whom we hear but do not see) in the underground rooms of the fourteenth-century hospital of Santa Maria della Scala. The man says he is ill and does not want to take to his grave the truth about Moro and the complete historical record, but wants to reveal it to the judge and tell him where Moro's full 'memoir' is to be found. He hopes that the true culprits will be uncovered and justice will be done. After a series of setbacks, Saracini is helped by Fernanda (Stefania Rocca), a lawyer, and his bodyguard Branco (Giancarlo Giannini). But, just when Saracini thinks Branco has helped him to solve some of the mysteries of the Moro case, he comes up against an obscure institutional body which stops him proceeding and he discovers that Branco is in fact an agent with the secret services. This, in brief, is the plot of the film whose title refers to the place where the journalist Mino Pecorelli was killed on 6 March 1979 by hitmen shortly after an arranged meeting with Colonel Antonio Varisco and another officer of the carabinieri, who was never identified, about the possibility of getting access to the Moro files. The title itself therefore also evokes an episode shrouded in mystery.

Martinelli describes himself as a 'cineasta con un impegno civile' and says he considers his film, aimed above all at a younger generation, an opportunity to reflect without claiming to provide a solution. He did not want to side with any faction but only to stimulate the audience 'a riflettere su tutte le incongruenze e le menzogne che da venticinque anni ruotano intorno a questo evento epocale, (...) destinato, probabilmente,

a rimanere uno dei tanti misteri insoluti del nostro paese'.<sup>131</sup> The director's aim – to bring out and promote an unofficial version of the facts – is, in my opinion, in contrast with the thriller format which was probably chosen for commercial reasons, as he himself suggests:

I miei *competitors* sono i film americani che sono film poderosi, con registi e attori di alto livello. Per competere con questa disparità di mezzi, io devo trovare dei soggetti che mettano in moto una macchina mediatica tale da darmi gratuitamente una certa visibilità.

(...) io cerco di far sì che i miei film abbiano soggetti adatti di per sé a creare un contesto mediatico, cercando anche di puntare su anteprime che creino l'evento. Ad esempio, *Vajont* fu proiettato sulla pancia della diga, la sera dell'anniversario della tragedia. *Piazza delle Cinque Lune* è stato proiettato a piazza del Campo a Siena (dove il film è ambientato) in modo altrettanto spettacolare. Questo significa creare un evento, fare in modo che la televisione e la stampa ne parlino.<sup>132</sup>

The decision to make a thriller might perhaps have drawn a few more people to see the film and, thus, to become aware of this interpretation of the Moro case. But how many of these spectators then considered the theory of a parallel power at least plausible? To expound an unpalatable theory through a format which, by definition, belongs to the realm of mystery, is probably not the most suitable choice, despite the fact that it follows the template of Raymond Chandler's detective novels, where one arrives at a more plausible version of the facts but does not reestablish justice. Even the spectator who has read and accepts Flamigni's theories is likely to be put off by the over-spectacular production, starting with the poster itself, with its bullet hole and trickle of blood, and by these versions of facts which seem to be substantiated by abundant evidence but which, when exposed to the cinema spotlights in the form of a

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<sup>131</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 12.

<sup>132</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 7, 8.

thriller, appear once again to be undermined. Aestheticized shots, digital tricks and spectacularization – stylemes typical of action cinema – stretch the audience's attention and patience to the limit and risk swamping them with form.

One is inclined to ask why the historian Flamigni and Moro's family, who collaborated on the film, did not realize that this spectacularization, rather than attracting public opinion to the conspiracy theory, would indirectly end by up reinforcing the existing power structure, as suggested in Žižek's reflections. Furthermore, this film seems to announce right from the start the failure of its own intentions. The investigations are in the hands of an able person but one at the end of his career, betrayed by his friends and flanked by a woman, whose family life is threatened by the inquiry itself. A film of accusation risks being seen as the family drama of a woman and a drama of the loneliness of an old judge. Moreover, the elderly man and the woman belong to two categories who are considered socially 'weak'. The other 'weak' character is the brigatista who decides to take Saracini to the 'memorial' and is about to die. The political drama once again becomes a personal, family drama which sees Saracini, like Moro, succumb.

During his retirement speech, which Saracini delivers before colleagues and friends in the beautiful Sala del Mappamondo of the Palazzo Comunale in Siena, the moral calibre of the judge who has spent his life in the search for truth and justice emerges clearly: 'Nell'appassionata ricerca della verità, nell'evocazione e nella diffusione della verità, risiede il segreto della vita'. Saracini and Moro are depicted as tragic heroes. Like Oedipus in Sophocles' tragedy, Saracini/Moro allows no obstacle to stop him and, like Oedipus, he sets forth, alone and abandoned by everyone, in the search for the 'truth'. As for Oedipus – for whom, according to Aristotle, *anagnorisis* or recognition coincides with *peripeteia*, the overturning of his situation – at the end

Saracini's discovery of the truth about the abduction coincides with the knowledge of his own human and political ruin, the result of his betrayal by the person he had trusted unconditionally.<sup>133</sup>

In the course of the film the details of Moro's abduction are obsessively remembered and Saracini now, like Moro twenty-five years before, must pit himself against 'reason of state'. Now, like then, there is no chance of winning. Reason of state has become identified with the narrow-minded reason of politicians in power and there is no figure capable of intervening to explain their motives. There is no great tragic *agon* like that which pits Antigone's compassion against Creon's defence of order, Oedipus' magnanimous commitment to the common good against blind Teiresias's knowledge of the god. The plots are subterranean and the weapons used are those of betrayal. Martinelli therefore, like Bellocchio, seems to draw upon classical mythology and from the plays of Sophocles in particular and, just as Bellocchio is unable to create a balanced opposition between Moro's reasons and those of his jailers, so Martinelli is unable to create one between the reasons of an honest magistrate in search of the truth and the plots of an inescapable state which remain obscure. What prevents them both from achieving a fully tragic dramatization of the subject matter is once again the lack of any real exploration of the reasons of the antagonists.

### *Lato destro*

I saw the first performance of *Lato destro* by Gianluca Floris at the Teatro Baretto, Turin, directed by Floris and Lorenzo Fontana, on 5 April 2005.<sup>134</sup> The play, like

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<sup>133</sup> According to Jean-Pierre Vernant and Pierre Vidal-Naquet, 'The two fundamental elements of a tragic tale, apart from the "pathetic", are recognition (...) and peripeteia (...) that is to say the reversal of the action into its contrary'. 'Ambiguity and Reversal: On the Enigmatic Structure of *Oedipus Rex*', in Jean-Pierre Vernant and Pierre Vidal-Naquet (eds), *Myth and Tragedy in Ancient Greece*, New York: Zone Books, 1988, p. 117; Aristotle, *Poetics*, 1452a, 25-30.

Martinelli's film, is based on Sergio Flamigni's investigations and reconstructions, and this serves to place it among the 'conspiracy theory' representations, even though Floris himself has stressed that

sarebbe stata dietrologia affrontare la domanda sul perchè *lo Stato* abbia fatto tutto questo. Io ho voluto rappresentare una domanda diversa: è veramente possibile che i brigatisti che conosciamo hanno portato a termine un'azione come quella di via Fani? La risposta è chiaramente no. Io metto una serie di indizi in forma di domande aperte, anche perchè drammaturgicamente è molto più forte porre le domande, suscitare la curiosità, l'indignazione civile e la memoria che non dare risposte.<sup>135</sup>

The title of the theatre piece refers to one of the main questions about the massacre in Via Fani. Who was it that fired from the right side of the cars carrying Moro and his bodyguards and, with 49 shots of the 80 fired in total, ensured the 'success' of the Red Brigades' mission? Fundamental to this question is the consideration that the massacre in Via Fani was a military operation carried out with great brutality and precision and that the Red Brigades lacked the military training necessary to be able to achieve that without the action of the 'man on the right'. The originality of Floris's production lies in the fact that he has supplied this 'mystery man' with a biography. In the stage play it is this man, a former mercenary, who, 27 years after the massacre in Via Fani, gives a first person account of his life. Floris in other words wanted to show what came before the Moro case, what led up to the massacre:

qui non ci occuperemo del Caso Moro ma ci fermeremo a commentare, a raccontare e a immaginare solo il momento della strage di via Fani. Rivolgeremo la nostra attenzione a quel momento che segnò bruscamente l'ingresso della realtà nei nostri luoghi dell'immaginazione, nei luoghi della nostra mente dove fino ad allora lo spartiacque fra finzione e realtà era stato ben delineato.

<sup>134</sup> Floris, Gianluca, *Lato destro*, first performance: Teatro Baretto, Turin, 5 April 2005, directed by Gianluca Floris and Lorenzo Fontana.

<sup>135</sup> Unless otherwise indicated, quotations from Gianluca Floris are from my interview with him, Turin, 6 April 2005.

Fino ad allora. Fino alla mattina di quel giovedì 16 marzo 1978.<sup>136</sup>



Fig. 8. Gianluca Floris, *Lato destro* (in foreground Rodolfo Traversa; in background Alessandro Curino, Lorenzo Fontana, Giancarlo Judica Cordiglia, Davide Livermore, Andrea Simonetti). Photograph by Fabrizio Esposito, courtesy of Teatro Baretto, Turin.

Floris relates how, during the Moro case, cinema and fiction entered his daily life. With *Lato destro* he wanted to ‘riportare la fiction, questa volta fatta da me, all’interno di una storia vera’. To achieve this, the director invented the biography of the mercenary who tells his story from stage right while the five other actors who play the bodyguards are seated stage left (Fig. 8). The latter are already on stage when the play starts, seated around tables as if in a bar, surrounded by photographs and other images from the 1970s and from the present. This set evokes the idea that history is made up of stories and the bar is one of the everyday places in which we exchange them. In an earlier version of the project, as Floris told me, the five characters were to have got up from five different places in the stalls and, one by one, gone to sit on the stage, which was to have been occupied initially by the assassin alone. At the end of the play the

<sup>136</sup> Gianluca Floris, *Lato destro*, unpublished script (copy given to me by the author), pp. 2, 3.

sound effects of the shooting were to have been accompanied by a strobe which, once it had stopped flashing, would have lit up the bodies of the five bodyguards dead and covered in blood. However, Floris abandoned this idea not only because it was too contrived, but also because he prefers, as he himself says, a 'theatre of words' rather than a theatre of special effects. For this same reason, Floris also shelved another idea, that of bringing a cameraman on stage to film the testimony of the killer which would have been simultaneously projected on a screen in the auditorium.

The five characters play the bodyguards but they also represent public opinion and in this guise they ask questions about some of the problem areas of the investigations into the Moro case. These are the same questions that Martinelli tried to answer with his Super8 film and which Floris tries to answer with the words of an invented biography. Both representations have tried to enact the invisible, to expose a few threads of the 'obscure plot' which the authors see as lying behind the Moro abduction. However, many former militants of the 1970s are unconvinced. Oreste Scalzone and Paolo Persichetti have described these explanations as 'forme devastanti a cui possono condurre alcune forme irreparabili di *psicopatologia della menzogna storica*' or as 'turbe legate alla *sindrome maniacale da ossessione del complotto e metacomplotto*'.<sup>137</sup>

Unlike Martinelli's film, which in many sequences is a sort of mechanical run-through of the main mysteries of the Moro case and Flamigni's reconstructions, *Lato destro* manages to bring to life a complex character who represents the perpetrator of the Via Fani massacre but also the survivor. Brought back to life, like a ghost or a revenant spirit, he dwells on the threshold between day and night, life and death, without family or fixed abode, living in anonymity. He presents the voice of a witness

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<sup>137</sup> Persichetti and Scalzone, *Il nemico inconfessabile*, p. 7.

who has watched and acted and now sees himself being watched by others and by us who become, in our turn, witnesses. The mercenary cannot compare himself with anyone else; there are no others in his position; he is a witness to himself and to 'the other', to that hidden power which can only be described by the proper name of the person who represents it, a certain Fausto,

giovane ma estremamente determinato. La prima impressione che ne ricavai fu che si trattasse di un militare, di uno addestrato militarmente da un esercito regolare. Aveva tratti somatici comuni ma sicuramente mediterranei. Poteva essere spagnolo, greco, italiano, ma anche iugoslavo o bulgaro.<sup>138</sup>

There is just one passage in the script where Fausto speaks of himself and the plan he proposes to the killer:

La questione è più complicata di come ti sei immaginato tu, e nello stesso tempo è meno grave di come tu te la immagini. Innanzitutto la presenza sulla scena dei, chiamiamoli così, dilettanti è assolutamente necessaria, non evitabile e insindacabile. Fa parte della proposta che ti stiamo facendo e fa parte integrante ed imprescindibile della strategia d'azione che ci siamo dati.<sup>139</sup>

Once again the motives of those active in the armed movement are not tackled and the description given of them undermines them politically, making them appear not only as naïve, like pawns, but above all as incompetent. Fausto does not supply the mercenary with any ideological-political profile of the 'terrorist' group, whose actions he briefly describes:

avevano fatto delle azioni di gambizzazione di qualche personaggio di secondo piano tipo giornalisti o professori universitari e che avevano fatto qualche rapina

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<sup>138</sup> Floris, *Lato destro*, p. 17.

<sup>139</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 23.



ad uffici postali. Mi diceva che utilizzavano dei campi in periferia nei quali si addestravano sparando a delle carcasse di auto abbandonate.<sup>140</sup>

The mercenary describes himself in contrast to them as a ‘professional’, superior in both skill and malevolence to these ‘quattro, cinque o sei bambocci [...] che giocano a fare i cattivi che sparano dove non devono e quando non devono’.<sup>141</sup> His insistence on his own professionalism, which leaves no room for feelings of guilt or moments of weakness, creates a figure who allows no empathy of any kind:

Sono diventato a 27 anni un *esperto* soldato ma anche un *esperto* assassino.(...) In sei anni da mercenario in Africa avevo imparato ad uccidere a sangue freddo guardando negli occhi le mie vittime.

Dopo i miei primi sei anni da *professionista* in Africa, mi ero già guadagnato una certa fama come, diciamo, *serio professionista*. Dopo tutti questi anni posso anche tradurre per chi mi ascolta il termine ‘*serio professionista*’ in: ‘spietato e freddo assassino’ oppure in ‘pronto ed efficace soldato’, come preferite. (...) E nello stesso tempo ero diventato anche *uno dei più stimati e affidabili professionisti* conosciuti nel mio settore: quello dei mercenari, degli assassini a pagamento.<sup>142</sup>

Once again there emerges a total absence of ideological motives; those of the brigatisti are lacking, those of Fausto are lacking, the only motivation is the material one of the mercenary.

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<sup>140</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 21.

<sup>141</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 21.

<sup>142</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 9, 6. The italics are mine here and in the following quotations, and they draw attention to the frequent occurrence of ‘professionista’ and cognate terms : ‘Si era sparsa la voce che ero un affidabile “professionista”’ (p. 10); ‘ormai avevo completamente rimosso qualsiasi senso di colpa. Uccidere era diventato un *gesto professionalmente neutro*, senza nessuna connotazione morale’ (p. 13); ‘Si trattava di fare un grosso salto di qualità *nella mia professione*’ (p. 18); ‘La *mia professione* prevedeva un addestramento efficace’ (p.18); ‘Una *freddezza veramente professionale*’ (p. 28); ‘Quella perfetta azione di comando eseguita per strada con *grande professionalità* da parte dei partecipanti’ (p.2); ‘[il mio sogno] era quello di diventare *soldato professionista*’ (p. 6).

### *Amici e nemici*

Giampaolo Spinato's fourth novel *Amici e nemici*, published in January 2004, is a *roman à thèse* which describes both the massacre in Via Fani and the 55 days of Moro's captivity.<sup>143</sup> It promotes the conspiracy theory through the story of an imaginary parallel abduction, that of a brigatista known as Sebastiano – in reality the combat name of a certain Comandante Leto who, wounded during the abduction of Moro (referred to in the novel as the 'President'), is taken prisoner by a mysterious character from a right-wing terrorist group who was present at the massacre. The novel is divided into nine 'acts', in turn sub-divided into five short chapters each of which is named after one of the main characters or groups of characters – the President, the Son of a Bitch (Il figlio di Puttana), the boys (I ragazzi) – or a place with a symbolic-metonymic function – Parliament, politics, the ruling cliques (il Palazzo) – except for the first and last act where we find, respectively, a chapter called '16 marzo 1978' and one called 'La Pietà', which mark the beginning and end of the abduction. The mysterious right-wing character is represented from the first act, 'La Strage' (the Massacre), when he orders Comandante Leto, wounded during the ambush, to get up and follow him while with broken phrases he alludes to the naivety with which the brigatisti have let themselves be manipulated:

Mi hai deluso...non ti facevo, sai, così coglione.  
 Ma come vi è venuto in mente?  
 (...) Ti rendi conto...Comandante Leto?  
 Avete fatto esattamente quello che volevan *loro*.  
 Ma no, figuriamoci, eh-eh che cazzo dico?  
 State facendo la Rivoluzione, voi, eh, Ingegnere  
 (...) Mm? Non hai mai avuto neanche un dubbio in tutti questi anni....

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<sup>143</sup> Giampaolo Spinato set his second novel, *Il cuore rovesciato* (Milan: Mondadori, 1998), at the end of the 1960s, and his third, *Di qua e di là dal cielo* (Milan: Mondadori, 2001) in the Milanese hinterland of the 1970s. In the latter one of the two main characters, Sebastiano, who has been sent to a seminary by his rich mother, develops there a propensity for terrorism.

che ne so, nel dormiveglia, in sogno, per un momento, che chi credevi di combattere, chi odiavi, quei borghesi, eh, i bastardi, gli assassini, tutti quei potenti...

Erano al tuo fianco, nei tuoi pensieri...

Erano più vicini di quanto non credevi...

*Erano loro* a decidere le tue parole, le tue azioni...

Non dici niente, Comandante Leto?<sup>144</sup>

The novel is interesting not only for the way it represents this hidden power but also for its depiction of Moro, whom Spinato has chosen to represent as 'sciolto dalla forma', from a human angle rather than a political one. The chapters dedicated to Moro the hostage could constitute a book in themselves: he wonders 'Perché proprio io (...) – e in quel modo plateale, in pieno giorno, prendendosi dei rischi, sparando ed uccidendo'.<sup>145</sup>

When he is transported from the site of the ambush to the Prigione del Popolo, he is described as if his body were already the corpse in the boot of the Renault 4:

si era afflosciato con naturalezza, senza resistenza, con sorpresa, quasi separandosi dal corpo, abbandonandolo fra le pareti strette del contenitore, ai vimini, sentendo il vuoto intorno, la vertigine del volo, il dondolio frenetico, la sospensione nel trasbordo da un veicolo sull'altro.<sup>146</sup>

That same body is then 'rannicchiato sulla branda', weighed down by everyday tasks and by tears:

Si avvicinò al vassoio, si chinò, si sporse. Prese la tazza, la portò alla bocca. Appoggiò le labbra al bordo, odorò, soffiò, provò a trarne un soffio, bevve.

Ma qui pianse.<sup>147</sup>

<sup>144</sup> Giampaolo Spinato, *Amici e nemici*, p. 10 (my italics).

<sup>145</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 57.

<sup>146</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 58.

<sup>147</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 60.

Spinato has chosen not to show Moro in his interaction with the brigatisti as much as in his personal deportment, in dialogue with himself, while he tries to orientate himself in a situation of extreme alienation, gradually arriving at the realization of being the victim of a plot: 'non da loro [i brigatisti], forse, in fondo, aveva da temere per la sua incolumità fisica (...) la sua vita era nelle mani di qualcuno molto, molto più in alto'.<sup>148</sup> Spinato describes effectively the wearing down, the intolerable passage of time, which stretches out without a defined end – unlike those who are in conventional prisons, Moro does not actually know how long he will remain there – and he poses questions without any answer: about his jailers' intentions, his own fate and that of his escort, of the families thrown into this irreparable grief, on the reaction of the country and of his friends and enemies.

His lack of *recognition* of himself as a 'justifiable' victim of an ambush and then his *not being recognized*, on either human or political grounds, as a life worth saving, as an authentic voice in his letters, confer once again on the character of Moro the stature of a tragic hero who succumbs to the accusations of the brigatisti, the indifference of his companions in the party and the interpretations of unknown graphologists, psychiatrists and experts from overseas. Spinato's novel, like Ferrara's earlier film, which we shall now consider, manages to flesh out both the drama of Moro once again in tragic terms and the conspiracy theory of which he is aware.

### ***Il caso Moro***

In a book called *Misteri del caso Moro* Giuseppe Ferrara has expressed a very critical view of *Buongiorno, notte*:

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<sup>148</sup> *Ibid.*, p.106

Spostando il punto di vista dei brigatisti, Bellocchio si è subito messo nella scia degli 'integrati', degli anticomplotisti, e quindi, forse non scientemente, dalla parte di Cossiga e di Andreotti. E non solo, purtroppo. Accorgendosi dell'impudenza commessa, il regista continua a dire ad ogni occasione che non ha voluto fare un film storico, e che per la figura di Moro si è ispirato a suo padre. Fandonie. *Buongiorno, notte* è addirittura un film a tesi che racconta per filo e per segno 54 giorni della prigionia di Moro e dei suoi carcerieri. Il cinquantacinquesimo giorno, quella della morte, resta fuori dal film al fine implicito di salvare l'umanità dei brigatisti, di non farli apparire troppo crudeli; anzi, al posto dell'assassinio viene messo un 'sogno' della Braghetti, che vorrebbe liberare il prigioniero. Ed effettivamente il film termina con Moro che passeggia allegramente in una Roma deserta alle prime luci dell'alba. Un finale abbastanza strano perché in nessun'altra forma ci viene fatto sapere che la sentenza di morte è stata eseguita. Chi non conosce come sono andate veramente le cose, per esempio il pubblico giapponese, penserà che Moro si sia salvato davvero; a tanto è giunta la volontà salvifica del regista nei confronti dei Br assassini: quasi da farci credere che non l'abbiano ammazzato. Sono sicuro che *Buongiorno, notte* sarà piaciuto moltissimo a Mario Moretti (...).<sup>149</sup>

According to Ferrara, to have confronted the Moro case as Bellocchio did, distancing himself from the conspiracy theory, choosing the woman's viewpoint and showing the possibility of the humanity and the repentance of the brigatisti, meant placing himself not just on the side of the 'good terrorist' but actually on that of Andreotti and Cossiga. *Buongiorno, notte* had a much longer and more successful run than Ferrara's own *Il caso Moro*, which came out in 1986. Based on Robert Katz's book *Days of Wrath: The Public Agony of Aldo Moro*, the plot of Ferrara's film interweaves three narrative strands: the incarceration of the hostage, the negotiations and manoeuvres of the state, and the Moro family.<sup>150</sup> I have placed it in this part of the chapter because it presents the possible connections between the abduction and the Italian and foreign secret services. Although Ferrara claimed, when the film was released, that he wanted to heighten the Italian public's awareness and push them towards a search for the truth, it seems that this intention, which was very similar to that expressed more recently by Martinelli

<sup>149</sup> Giuseppe Ferrara, *Misteri del caso Moro*, Bolsena: Massari Editori, 2003, pp. 20, 21.

<sup>150</sup> Robert Katz, *Days of Wrath: The Public Agony of Aldo Moro*, St. Albans: Granada, 1980. As for the depiction of Moro's family, Maria Fida Moro told me that she does not recognize herself at all in Ferrara's representation.

about *Piazza delle Cinque Lune*, did not have the desired effect.<sup>151</sup> In the harsh judgement of Sandro Zambetti,

*Il caso Moro* non ha dato luogo ad un serio ed ampio dibattito, né, tantomeno, ha 'diviso il pubblico' o l'ha 'spinto alla ricerca della verità' semplicemente perché strutturato in modo tale da non essere in grado di raggiungere tali obiettivi.<sup>152</sup>

Ferrara's work, like that of Martinelli, Floris and Spinato, reveals once again the paradox that even those who interpret the case as a plot that has remained unpunished play into the hands of the power which organized this plot.

Ferrara criticizes Bellocchio's film for its failure to depict the killing of Moro. However, in my opinion Bellocchio had no intention to hide the real outcome of the captivity since the film ends with archive footage showing the memorial service for Moro organized by the state and the killing is, in any case, clearly suggested in a shot of the brigatisti leading the blindfolded Moro out of the *covo*, even though the shooting itself is not shown. This *disappearance of the visible*, designed to make the audience think about what has actually taken place, can in certain cases be more effective than that of the more overt conspiracy theory accounts – Ferrara's included – which try to *make the invisible visible*. I do not believe, therefore, that it is appropriate to accuse *Buongiorno, notte* of siding with the state. On the contrary, it gives an empty and far from positive representation of the political class, as the last scene shows. In Ferrara's film, Moro, played by Gian Maria Volontè, is an intense character, a wise person more than a politician – here also Moro is shown in the 'sciogliersi dalla forma' –, a man of great dignity who is aware that only his own family 'recognize' him and are struggling

<sup>151</sup> Ferrara had a background in committed film-making, with films including *Il sasso in bocca* (1970), *Faccia di spia* (1975) and *Cento giorni a Palermo* (1984).

<sup>152</sup> Sandro Zambetti, 'Ma non era anche un leader della DC?', *Cineforum*, Vol. XXVI, No. 260, December 1986, p. 14.

to get him released. Volontè had also played *Signor M* in Elio Petri's *Todo modo* (1976), based on Sciascia's novel of the same name, which was set in other times but was an explicit metaphor for the Moro years. On that occasion, however, he had undermined the figure of Moro:

Sono le ironie della Storia: dieci anni fa nell'allegorico, grottesco, isterico *Todo modo* di Petri, Volontè aveva fatto del 'signor M' (due parti di Moro, una di Andreotti) un emblema della razza padrona, un Tartufo 'sub specie politica'; oggi mettendo la sordina al suo formidabile mimetismo istrionico, fa di Moro un personaggio di vittima, di mesto e consapevole capro espiatorio, con rispetto e affetto, con una 'pietas' di grande e ben temperata commozione.<sup>153</sup>

Ferrara's film also tries to depict, on the basis of the way Moro wrote about them in his letters, Moro's wife, his children and in particular his grandson Luca as having the same dignity and strength. The film proceeds step-by-step through the events and the choice of using doubles to play the most important politicians produces a parodic and grotesque effect, perhaps intended to show that they actually are just 'masks' acting on behalf of 'reason of state', unable to 'sciogliersi dalla forma'.

The obscure plotting of a hidden power is clearly indicated by some of the dialogue and also by the sequences with the politicians, who are often shot from above as if to indicate a superior will manoeuvring them. Above all, covert American involvement and the operations of the police and experts (graphologists and psychiatrists) are shown in a caricatural way. Moro is depicted, once again, as a tragic character who does not have antagonists. He is surrounded by masks of power and masks of ideology (the motives of the brigatisti are not made clear in this film either). The media are also portrayed but whereas in *Buongiorno, notte* television is the means by which the brigatisti are in contact with the reactions and perceptions of the outside

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<sup>153</sup> Morando Morandini, 'È la tragedia di un uomo abbandonato', *Il Giorno*, 14 November 1986.

world (perceptions which Bellocchio challenges in his portrayal) in Ferrara's film television marks the progress of the narrative. The way it shows the actions of the terrorists adheres strictly to the way these were reported at the time of the abduction and also shows the contrasting details. Ferrara's movie camera is like the television camera of a journalist who tries to investigate, to follow even those bits of evidence which would open up other possible avenues. Zambetti has said that Ferrara '*si attiene e sostiene la tesi del complotto, ma non la porta avanti, non scava nelle situazioni*'.<sup>154</sup>

### 1.5 Conclusion

The texts analysed in this chapter are fairly diverse. *Buongiorno, notte* presents an internal perspective on Moro's 55 days of imprisonment and describes those who were inside the hideout, whereas in *Corpo di stato* and *L'ira del sole* actor-narrators who were outside it speak and recount their own feelings. *Aldo Moro: une tragédie italienne* is a hybrid work which cites, uncritically, texts that are very different from each other in ways I have already pointed out, and which I have grouped separately. For this reason I placed it between the two main parts of this chapter by way of an interlude. The texts examined in the second part portray the Moro case from the perspective of the 'conspiracy theory', and thus end up by giving more emphasis to mysterious characters, representatives of the hidden state or the secret services.

Despite the variety of texts discussed it seems that one can find in all of them the 'shadow of Sciascia', to paraphrase the title of Adriano Sofri's book *L'ombra di Moro*, with which I want to conclude this chapter.<sup>155</sup> In all the texts there are in fact direct references to Sciascia's reflections in *L'affaire Moro* and/or to the three main motifs I

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<sup>154</sup> Zambetti, 'Ma non era anche un leader della DC?', p. 14.

<sup>155</sup> Sofri, *L'ombra di Moro*.



identified in it: the 'dissolution from form' in Moro at the same time his tragic grandeur as prisoner; the relationship between truth and history, and between writing and reality; and the motif of light. It is not surprising that, twelve years later, when Adriano Sofri decided to reflect on the letters by Moro that had recently been uncovered in the BR hideout in Via Monte Nevoso, he did so by openly modelling his text on Sciascia's. Just as Sciascia had written in the heat of the moment, immediately after Moro's death, so in 1990 Sofri writes immediately after this discovery which, although it did not contain any great revelations about Moro, or what had happened during the 55 days, confirmed the snail's pace of the Italian authorities: the hideout had first been searched back in October 1978 but nothing had been found. What is even more interesting is that it is Sofri, the ex-militant of Lotta Continua, who writes this text, someone who already. 'quando Moro fu rapito, (...) [aveva] abbandonato un mondo di vita strenuamente politico: non per fare altro, ma per aspettare, come ogni convalescente'. In other words, Sofri already in 1978 was far from sharing the methods and ideology of the BR, even though he claimed to recognize in them the 'shadow' of his own beliefs. As I acknowledged in the Introduction, the violence of the BR was not simply identifiable with the violence of the 1970s. The latter was quite widespread across the movement, even though it had different forms and assumptions:

Per quanto distanti da noi, e sconosciuti, e anzi agli antipodi ci sembrassero i brigatisti – tuttavia scorgevamo ancora nelle loro imprese un'ombra lugubre di ciò in cui noi avevamo creduto, della lingua che noi avevamo parlato.<sup>156</sup>

In this book Sofri stakes out his own distance both from the forms of armed struggle chosen by the clandestine groups and from the position of that state which was unable to

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<sup>156</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 53, 85.

recognize Moro ('miserabile rinnegamento') or the words he wrote in the *Prigione del Popolo* but was able, years later (Sofri does not say this, but of course it concerns his case directly) to believe a 'pentito', Leonardo Marino, who decided to come forward and make a confession after sixteen years of silence. I do not want to compare Sofri's situation to Moro's except to say that one can discern a Kafkaesque affinity in their respective relations with the law. Sofri's text, like Scascia's, emphasizes Moro's dignity and the state's mysterious (he does not say much more) attitude of rigidity, a state which did not know what to do with a man's letters because

si figuravano il silenzio di un martire o i gemiti di una vittima, e si trovarono fra le mani un'asciutta prospettazione di condizioni, rischi e decisioni da assumere. Questo abissale equivoco si consumò allora, e allontanò fino al rigetto reciproco Moro e le persone del mondo di fuori.<sup>157</sup>

As Sofri records, Moro wrote, bitterly and ironically, 'E poi questi rigori in un paese proprio in un paese scombinato come l'Italia'.<sup>158</sup>

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<sup>157</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 44.

<sup>158</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 91.

## Chapter Two

### *Altri in casa: generations and political violence*

la contestazione, anche per un tipo come me, era abbastanza spiegabile attraverso il paradigma della rivolta contro il padre, fino al parricidio. Il problema è che l'odio del padre ci è stato reso con gli interessi....

(Oreste Scalzone, testimony in Daniele Biacchessi, *Vie di fuga. Storie di clandestini e latitanti*, Milan: Mursia, 2004, pp. 63-4)

#### 2. 1 Introduction

The theme of generational conflict that was touched on in representations of the Moro case – the abduction as an attack on the father and the murder as symbolic parricide, the woman terrorist as symbolic daughter, the Red Brigades emulating or repudiating their ‘Resistance fathers’ – recurs and is more central in many other texts dealing with left political violence. In this chapter I shall explore this theme further, concentrating on two main variants: the father-son conflict and the mother-daughter/son relationship. The texts I shall consider for the first are three films: *Caro papà* (1979), directed by Dino Risi, *La tragedia di un uomo ridicolo* (1981) by Bernardo Bertolucci and *Colpire al cuore* (1982) by Gianni Amelio; for the second they are the film *Segreti segreti* (1985) by Giuseppe Bertolucci, the novel *Caro Michele* (1973) by Natalia Ginzburg (with brief observations on the film version of 1976 by Mario Monicelli) and the novel *La voce nel pozzo* (1990) by Nerino Rossi.

Why have so many representations of political violence concentrated on intergenerational family relationships? There seems to me two possible explanations: *repression of politics* and *personalization of politics*. In the first case, one may argue that the foregrounding of the family in these stories is a way of pushing the political reality of the *anni di piombo* to the margins and *repressing* the political content of these years. This might be interpreted in turn as a symptom of the unease felt by writers and filmmakers in dealing with the phenomenon and of their inability to confront an unresolved period in Italian history. The repression of politics, moreover, might be seen as going hand in hand with stylistic ‘normalization’. The works I analyse here are mostly ‘classical’ in style and structure. Their plot mechanisms are fairly traditional, their narratives rarely depart from a linear time sequence apart from the occasional flashback (*Segreti segreti* is an exception here) and the point of view is almost always that of the character around whom the action revolves. The fact that there is a proliferation of viewpoints in *Caro Michele* does not contradict this general rule since all the voices in it share fundamentally the same ‘register’. This lack of stylistic innovation might perhaps be read as an attempt to lead an uncomfortable subject back to ‘normalization’ in order to exorcize, in some way, its revolutionary potential.

The second explanation is apparently the opposite of the first. By turning their attention on the family these texts attempt to ‘get closer’ to the reality of the *anni di piombo*, to see it from a different perspective than the ‘official’, public, one. According to this view, the films and novels I examine here have sought to make a more detailed and sensitive analysis of the period by recounting a ‘personalized’ past. Seen in these

terms, they are driven not by a wish to *repress the political* but by a desire to *personalize* politics.<sup>1</sup>

According to this second hypothesis, the portrayal of political violence through personal conflicts and experiences aims to create a link between the private situation and the social/public one, probably in relation to the politicization of the young in the 1960s and 1970s and to the subsequent affirmation that the 'personal is political'.<sup>2</sup> From this perspective, the fathers, mothers and children featured in these texts are 'fathers', 'mothers' and 'children' not only in the biological sense but also and above all in the political and social sense. The family is seen not just as the site of intimate relationships but also as an active element in society. It is, as Chiara Saraceno has put it, not

un semplice terminale passivo del mutamento sociale ma uno degli attori sociali che contribuiscono a definire i modi e i sensi del mutamento sociale stesso, sia pure con gradi di libertà diversa a seconda delle circostanze.<sup>3</sup>

For more than a century now anthropological studies have highlighted the importance of family structure and of different family forms for an understanding of the development of societies.

From this viewpoint, the family is the place where it is possible to observe 'continuità e differenziazione, rottura e ridefinizione', where the sexes and generations

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<sup>1</sup> Lesley Caldwell's essay on *La tragedia di un uomo ridicolo* and *Colpire al cuore* emphasises their importance in giving 'some insight into discussions about the paternal role and about Italian society in that time' and makes both a historical and a psychoanalytic reading, informed by feminism, of the two films. 'Is the Political Personal? Fathers and Sons in Bertolucci's *La tragedia di un uomo ridicolo* (1981) and Amelio's *Colpire al cuore* (1982)', in Anna Cento Bull and Adalgisa Giorgio (eds), *Speaking Out and Silencing: Culture Society and Politics in Italy in the 1970s*, Leeds: Northwestern Universities Press, forthcoming 2005 (unpublished version quoted with the author's permission). The work of Trowell and Etchegoyen, quoted by Caldwell, is fundamental in relation to this argument because of their thesis that 'fathering and mothering are important biological, psychological and societal stimuli that foster the further development of adults'; that they are to be considered 'states of mind at both conscious and unconscious level' and that they 'influence management and leadership styles in all organizations, even extending to the politics of nations and the relationships between nations'. Judith Trowell and Alicia Etchegoyen, *The Importance of Fathers*, New York: Brunner-Routledge, 2001, p. xvi.

<sup>2</sup> Alessandro Portelli, *The Battle of Valle Giulia: Oral History and the Art of Dialogue*, Madison: The University of Wisconsin Press, 1997, pp. vii-x.

<sup>3</sup> Chiara Saraceno, *Sociologia della famiglia*, Bologna: Il Mulino, 1988, p. 10.

meet and clash.<sup>4</sup> Tamara Hareven and Charles Tilly have stressed the importance of the study of family history for an the understanding of both the public and the privatesphere.<sup>5</sup> In view of this, when I speak here of the family in relation to political violence I shall bear in mind the structural, functional/behavioural and generational characteristics of the family in a perspective which pays close attention to the way these have changed over time.<sup>6</sup>

In addition, if one of the principal functions of the family is the process of socialization, that is to say the transmission and enactment of the fundamental norms of life in society, and if the family, like the state, is, in this sense, an institution that represents and channels social authority, then political violence may be considered as a twofold 'resistance': a resistance both to the institution of the family, in the sense of a refusal to conform to certain norms transmitted by it, and to the state, in a desire to become an 'obstacle' to the ruling power.<sup>7</sup>

The films and novels I shall analyse here represent the nuclear family consisting of mother, father and children (*La tragedia di un uomo ridicolo*, *Colpire al cuore*) but also the single-parent family. The latter has been created, in some of them, by the death of the father (*Segreti segreti*, *La voce nel pozzo*), in others by the separation or divorce of the parents (*Caro papà*, *Caro Michele*). The mother is always depicted, although sometimes she has a marginal role. Furthermore, these are almost all urban families,

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<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 11.

<sup>5</sup> Charles Tilly, 'Family History, Social History and Social Change', *Journal of Family History*, Vol. 12, Nos 1-3, 1987, pp. 319-330; Tamara K. Hareven, 'The History of the Family as an Interdisciplinary Field', in Theodore K. Rabb and Robert I. Rotberg (eds), *The Family in History: Interdisciplinary Essays*, London: Harper, 1971, p. 223.

<sup>6</sup> Lawrence Stone, 'Family History in the 1980s', *Journal of Interdisciplinary History*, Vol. 12, No. 1 (Summer 1981), p. 51, stresses how the family has been the object of study of various disciplines, including sociology, anthropology, legal history and population studies.

<sup>7</sup> As we shall illustrate above all in the next chapter, on gender and the armed struggle, the clandestine groups often ended up reproducing a model of internal organization similar to that of the family which the group's members had earlier rejected. The process may be seen as similar to Freud's concept of negation (*Verneinung*) whereby the patient in psychoanalysis unconsciously affirms the very thing that he or she denies.

except for that of *La voce nel pozzo*, which is from the countryside around Bologna, and *Caro Michele*, where the mother has recently moved to the country. In both cases, the rural surroundings provide a background to maternal solitude. By focusing on the family nucleus, these writers and directors perhaps sought to provide the reader or viewer with the opportunity to recognize and observe a phenomenon which was still unfamiliar and unresolved – political violence – within a familiar/familial structure. One might even speculate that they chose this mode of representation deliberately as a warning to those who thought political violence was *elsewhere*: the perpetrators of political violence are not from *other people's homes*, but have been born and raised in *our home*, the homes of the nuclear urban family of the Italian middle class.<sup>8</sup>

The depiction of the single-parent family resulting from the divorce or separation of the parents reflects a real phenomenon of the 1970s. The divorce law in Italy was passed in 1970 and it survived the DC's attempt to repeal it in the referendum of 1974. The choice to illustrate this particular family structure might perhaps reflect the prejudice that 'la fine del matrimonio sancisce la dissoluzione della famiglia'.<sup>9</sup> In this way, involvement in armed struggle becomes linked to a family history which is portrayed as problematic and thus as a possible source of 'deviance' or rebellion. And yet Donatella della Porta, in a study she conducted, based on 28 life stories, of individual motives for engaging in armed struggle, found that

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<sup>8</sup> The films by Amelio and Bernardo Bertolucci are more or less consciously modelled on cases of real family conflict. One such case was that of Marco Donat Cattin, left activist and son of the leading Christian Democrat, Carlo Donat Cattin, which has been examined by Corrado Stajano: 'Marco Donat Cattin viveva nell'orbita del padre – la sua proiezione – ma agiva pervicacemente soprattutto contro di lui, felice se poteva indispettarlo, tormentarlo, ma bisognoso del padre che ogni volta doveva salvarlo, liberarlo dai guai, cancellare i guasti, sanare le pene. Sulle cose da fare o da non fare, ciò che contava, per Marco Donat Cattin, coscientemente o meno, era solo il giudizio paterno'. *L'Italia nichilista. Il caso di Marco Donat Cattin, la rivolta, il potere*, Milan: Mondadori, 1982, p. 11. It is worth recalling here also the murder of Walter Tobagi, carried out by a group of young, mainly well-off, people including the son of the film critic Morando Morandini, Paolo. See Roberto Arlati and Renzo Magosso, *Le carte di Moro, perché Tobagi*, Milan: Franco Angeli, 2003, p.132.

<sup>9</sup> Laura Fruggeri, *Famiglie. Dinamiche interpersonali e processi psico-sociali*, Rome: La Nuova Italia Scientifica, 1997, p. 30.

in oltre due terzi delle 28 storie di vita, la famiglia viene descritta come 'normale'. Solo nel rimanente terzo, sono emersi problemi familiari, quali la morte di un genitore nel periodo dell'infanzia o della prima adolescenza (3 casi), forti tensioni (2 casi) o la separazione dei genitori (3 casi).<sup>10</sup>

The texts I examine in this chapter tend to highlight one aspect of change in the family: the collapse of the model of patriarchal authority. Only occasionally and briefly do they show another aspect: the altered condition of the woman, her life outside the home, her entry into the workplace, the sexual revolution. What they depict above all is the change in the dynamics of the relationship between fathers and children, and in particular what Alberto Caracciolo has called the 'deteriorato rapporto generazionale'.<sup>11</sup> The fathers, no longer authoritarian, are not afraid to show affection towards their children and attempt a rapprochement, but the children reject it. As early as 1962, Natalia Ginzburg reported on this altered trend in parent-child relationships, criticizing the old ways but also emphasising the weaknesses of the new attitude:

Non giova che cerchiamo di rammentare e imitare, nei rapporti coi nostri figli, i modi tenuti dai nostri genitori con noi. Quello della nostra giovinezza e infanzia non era un tempo di piccole virtù: era un tempo di forti e sonore parole, che però a poco a poco perdevano la sostanza. Ora è un tempo di parole sommesse e frigide, di sotto alle quali forse riaffiora il desiderio d'una riconquista. Ma è un desiderio timido, e pieno di paura del ridicolo. Così ci rivestiamo di prudenza e astuzia. I nostri genitori non conoscevano né prudenza né astuzia; non conoscevano la paura del ridicolo; erano inconseguenti e incoerenti, ma non se ne accorgevano mai; si contraddicevano di continuo, ma non ammettevano mai d'essersi contraddetti. Usavano con noi un'autorità, che noi saremmo del tutto incapaci di usare. Forti dei loro principi, che credevano indistruttibili, regnavano con potere assoluto su noi. Ci assordavano di parole tuonanti; un dialogo non

<sup>10</sup> Donatella della Porta, *Il terrorismo di sinistra*, Bologna: Il Mulino, 1990, p. 134.

<sup>11</sup> 'La caduta di autorità nel privato si esprime soprattutto nel deteriorato rapporto generazionale'. Alberto Caracciolo, 'Caratteristiche della vita privata nell'Italia contemporanea', in Philippe Ariès and George Duby (eds), *La vita privata. Il Novecento*, Milan: Mondadori, 1994, p. 27 (original title: *Histoire de la vie privée*, Paris: Seuil, 1987).



era possibile, perché appena sospettavano di aver torto ci ordinavano di tacere; battevano il pugno sulla tavola, facendo tremare la stanza. Noi ricordiamo quel gesto, ma non sapremmo imitarlo. Possiamo infuriarci, urlare come lupi; ma in fondo alla nostra urla di lupo c'è un singhiozzo isterico, un rauco belato d'agnello.

Noi dunque non abbiamo autorità: non abbiamo armi.<sup>12</sup>

In a short story written in August 1969 Ginzburg wrote: 'il modo come vengono allevati questi nuovi bambini è complicato e faticoso; il modo antico era forse autoritario e sbadato'.<sup>13</sup>

Another interesting literary testimony is that of Goffredo Parise. In his *Sillabari* n. 2, published in 1982, under the entry 'Paternità', he describes the relationship between a father who is no longer authoritarian and his son.

Ogni giorno Piero Tommaseo-Pinzetta guardava i figli con amore paterno (...). Piero li guardava con amore e sempre tentava approcci, una carezza, un bacio, un abbraccio come se fossero stati bambini: ma, né i suoi sguardi né i suoi modi affettuosi erano graditi ai figli.

In realtà l'amore paterno e gli sguardi di Piero erano strani, per chi li vedeva e per l'istinto dei figli: erano sguardi di donna non più giovane e innamorata, richiedenti (uno sguardo, una carezza, un bacio) e remissivi (al rifiuto). Ed erano senza alcun dubbio sguardi come indeboliti dal troppo amore che cozzavano con quelli forti ed egoisti dei figli e contro i muscoli elastici e potenti. Erano, in una parola, gli sguardi della passione, sempre illusi e sempre delusi.<sup>14</sup>

<sup>12</sup> Natalia Ginzburg, *Le piccole virtù*, Turin: Einaudi, 1962, pp. 121. Ginzburg adds on the same page: 'Per quanto riguarda l'educazione dei figli, penso che si debbano insegnar loro non le piccole virtù, ma le grandi. Non il risparmio, ma la generosità e l'indifferenza al denaro; non la prudenza, ma il coraggio e lo sprezzo del pericolo; non l'astuzia ma la schiettezza e l'amore alla verità; non la diplomazia, ma l'amore al prossimo e l'abnegazione; non il desiderio del successo, ma il desiderio di essere e di sapere. (...) Ma le grandi virtù non si respirano nell'aria: e debbono essere la prima sostanza del nostro rapporto coi nostri figli, il primo fondamento dell'educazione' (*ibid.*, p. 121).

<sup>13</sup> Natalia Ginzburg, 'Lavori di casa', in *Mai devi domandarmi*, Milan: Garzanti, 1970, p. 87.

<sup>14</sup> Goffredo Parise, 'Paternità' in *Opere, Vol. II (Sillabari n. 2)*, Milan: Mondadori, 1989, pp. 449-53. Compare the remark of Luigi Zoja: 'Today's father can be judged by his children at any time and every moment: history has never before been acquainted with such a situation', *The Father: Historical, Psychological and Cultural Perspectives*, p. 272.

Like these passages from Ginzburg and Parise, the texts I am going to examine show overwhelmingly the negative aspect of the change in the relationship between parents and children and expose the ‘deteriorato rapporto generazionale’ which derives from the weakening or collapse of authority.

What do I mean by ‘generation’? The term designates a group of people who are not only of the same age (i.e. a cohort) but who also share (or have shared or lived through) the same events.<sup>15</sup> To be of different generations means that one has been ‘young’ at different times. Although the meaning of ‘young’ (as in ‘young people’) or ‘youth’ is variable and can therefore differ according to the person, the society and the historical moment, it is useful to adopt a general definition. In their essay on youth cultures, Alessandro Cavalli and Carmen Leccardi suggest that the term indicates people aged between 15 and 29.<sup>16</sup>

In the texts I examine, as well as the figure of the young person engaged in armed struggle, there is an adult figure, usually the father, who remembers his experience of the Resistance in 1945 as a key moment of his youth. To have been young in 1945 meant to have lived at first hand through the war, the Resistance and the postwar crisis. Cavalli and Leccardi point out how those born in the late 1920s and early 1930s were disoriented by the disappearance of the active conflict between fascism and anti-fascism. Whereas the latter had been ‘capace di predefinire e semplificare le scelte d’impegno, l’universo giovanile si trova ora privo di ancoraggi sicuri, immerso in un mondo sociale in rapido cambiamento e sempre più frammentato’.<sup>17</sup> The most significant characteristic of this generation, which tries to find a balance between the

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<sup>15</sup> Lewis S. Feuer, *The Conflicts of Generations: The Character and Significance of Student Movements*, London: Heinemann, 1969, pp. 25-26.

<sup>16</sup> Alessandro Cavalli and Carmen Leccardi, *Le culture giovanili in Storia dell’Italia Repubblicana. L’Italia nella crisi mondiale. L’ultimo ventennio*, Vol. III, Turin: Einaudi, 1997, p. 733.

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 733.

dramatic experiences they have lived through and the subsequent transformations, is political apathy. This stems from their pessimism about the future, paucity of political information, ideological confusion and lack of group consciousness. These youths of 1945, unlike their future children, do not constitute a collective community, 'non hanno ancora identità in quanto giovani e le loro riflessioni o i loro interrogativi non acquistano rilievo pubblico'.<sup>18</sup>

Luisa Passerini has argued that these active antifascists went so far as to deny 'il concetto stesso di generazione' because of their opposition to the myth, cultivated by the fascist regime, of a young generation in whose hands lay the salvation of party and state.<sup>19</sup> The period that followed the end of the war was, therefore, a very difficult one for the generation of young men who had no room to make their voice heard and who found it hard to free themselves from the old conventions, the old hierarchies based on age. These '(non) giovani' lived 'prevalentemente come apprendisti adulti tra gli adulti' while the latter experienced the cultural homogenization of the postwar years as a threat to their role as 'protectors'.<sup>20</sup> The passage through the education system then laid the basis for a profound differentiation between these young people, once they reached adulthood, and their own 'children'. As witnesses not only to the postwar crisis but also to the subsequent revival and the economic miracle, the postwar youth found themselves having to integrate the values honed by the experience of war and the Resistance with the new values carried by this wave of change.

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<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 723.

<sup>19</sup> Luisa Passerini, 'Youth as a Metaphor for Social Change: Fascist Italy and America in the 1950s', in Giovanni Levi and Jean-Claude Schmitt (eds), *History of Young People*, vol. 2: *Stormy Evolution to Modern Times*, Cambridge MA: Harvard University Press, 1997, pp. 292, 293.

<sup>20</sup> Cavalli and Leccardi, *Le culture giovanili*, pp. 724, 727. On Italian youth in the 1950s see also Simonetta Piccone Stella, *La prima generazione. Ragazze e ragazzi nel miracolo economico italiano*, Milan: Franco Angeli, 1993, and Enrica Capussotti, *Gioventù perduta. Gli anni '50 dei giovani e del cinema in Italia*, Florence: Giunti, 2004.

*Caro papà* introduces a father, of peasant origin, who represents exactly this postwar generation. He has experienced the war and fought in the Resistance and in the postwar economic boom he has achieved wealth and success. Similarly, Primo Spaggiari, the father in *La tragedia di un uomo ridicolo*, also an ex-partisan, becomes a company boss. For him, the gaining of independence in his work seems more than anything else to give meaning to his life. The company, which the father does not want to give up, becomes the symbol of his 'redeemed' identity which his son, however, rejects. In *Colpire al cuore*, Dario, younger than the other fathers, has been able to study and even become a university teacher while Aristide, ex-partisan and paternal figure in *La voce nel pozzo*, has entered the world of politics.

In these texts centreing on the hostile relationship between father and son no real weight is given to the mother, even though she is present in each of them. In *Caro papà* the mother is well-off, lives in Switzerland and takes no interest in her children. In *La tragedia di un uomo ridicolo* she is an educated woman who has been able to study but shows no interest in her husband's firm. In *Colpire al cuore* she is, by contrast, single-mindedly dedicated to her work as a translator. This marginalization of the mother figure may perhaps be traceable to the desire to portray a specific type of bond between two men, formed to the exclusion of the woman. The recurrence of this triangular configuration was analysed in literature by René Girard and subsequently explored by Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick, who emphasised the importance of the 'bond that links the two rivals (...) as intense and potent as the bond that links either of the rivals to the beloved'.<sup>21</sup> In the texts I examine it seems possible to identify this 'triangle of desire' where it is the oedipal rivalry between two men, father and son, that is given

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<sup>21</sup> René Girard, *Deceit, Desire and the Novel: Self and Other in Literary Structure*, Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1965 (translation of *Mensonge romantique et vérité romanesque*, 1961), and Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick, *Between Men: English Literature and Male Homosocial Desire*, New York: Columbia University Press, 1985, p. 21.

prominence. The mothers and/or other female figures who feature in the triangle are only a function of this masculine rivalry.

In the second group of texts I examine in this chapter, those that focus on the mother-daughter/son relationship, the woman's maternal dimension is prioritized (albeit negatively, as in *Segreti segreti*), even though this more or less consciously backs up the prejudice that 'Western culture reduces women to reproduction'.<sup>22</sup> Adriana in *Caro Michele*, Giovanna in *La voce nel pozzo* and Mara in *Segreti segreti* are mothers who await the return of their sons. They do not believe it is possible that they are involved in the armed struggle so, like modern-day Jocastas, they do not 'recognize' them as possible 'terrorists'.<sup>23</sup>

The 'generation of sons and daughters', those who live 1968 and the 1970s as young people, experience, unlike their fathers' generation, a strong sense of belonging to their own time. They play a political role; they represent an era. For Passerini it is precisely with this generation of the 1960s that the history of young people really takes off. Politics becomes part of the private sphere, it becomes personal and perhaps, as I have suggested, it is for just this reason that these texts concentrate on the family and show how political choices interact with everyday life. While the 'fathers' who had been part of the Resistance had to go into hiding to escape from the Germans and the

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<sup>22</sup> Kelly Oliver, *Reading Kristeva: Unraveling the Double-bind*, Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1993, p. 7.

<sup>23</sup> Marianne Hirsch, *The Mother/Daughter Plot: Narrative, Psychoanalysis, Feminism*, Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1989, pp. 8, 11. A similar example is found in Tabucchi's short story 'Dolores Ibarruri piange lacrime amare', where a mother recalls her husband and son, both of whom died for their ideals. The husband, Rodolfo, fought as a Communist in the Spanish Civil War alongside La Pasionaria (Dolores Ibarruri), but was ultimately disillusioned by the Soviet Union. The son, affectionately known as Piticche, has been killed for his ideals, which (as in so many texts that touch on 1970s left activism) are left unspecified. The theme of politics is fused with the personal and intimate memories of the mother, who does not recognize her own son in the press photographs and reports: 'Era un bambino allegro (...). Anche affettuoso. (...) Ecco. Così era mio figlio. Cosa gli hanno fatto? Ho visto la foto sui giornali, lo hanno trucidato, e io non ho potuto neanche vederlo, hanno scritto che ha fatto cose...non ho il coraggio di dirlo...atroci. Hanno detto atroci? Comunque lei ha sentito un'altra storia, la storia di una persona che lei non conosce, io le ho parlato del mio Piticche (...)'. Antonio Tabucchi, 'Dolores Ibarruri piange lacrime amare', in *Il gioco del rovescio e altri racconti*, Milan: Feltrinelli, 1984 (first published Milan: Il Saggiatore, 1981), pp. 95, 100.

Fascists, the 'children' in these films go underground at first in their own homes, within the family which they, therefore, 'strike' from within. Marco in *Caro papà* plans with his group the kneecapping of his own father, with whom he has heated arguments. His sister, who appears briefly, spits at her father when he visits the rehabilitation centre where she is being taken off drugs; it is clear that she has neither fear nor respect for him. In *La tragedia di un uomo ridicolo* Giovanni, the son, describes his father as 'un industrialotto cafone' and plans to extort money from him by pretending to have himself abducted. Emilio, on the other hand, in *Colpire al cuore*, reports his father to the police because he suspects him of supporting a terrorist group. In *La voce nel pozzo*, the young Luca treats Aristide with sarcasm and contempt.

There are two other changes that these texts register as setting the generations apart. The first is their different level of education. If the fathers' generation had been mainly successful economically, the children's generation has succeeded educationally. Marco, Emilio, Giovanni, Laura, Marina, Luca are all students or recent graduates. The second change is in their relationship with the mass media. Television had been the symbol of rebirth of the postwar era, of material well-being and consumption. Although not yet in every home, the television set was an object of aggregation for families.<sup>24</sup> In the films and novels discussed here it is through the media – television above all, but also radio – that news about terrorist acts is circulated and in this process the unifying function of these media within the family is overturned: radio and television become elements of disaggregation which show the fathers the reality of their children (or the other way round in *Colpire al cuore*, where the hostility towards the father is similar to

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<sup>24</sup> Peter Laslett, 'Elusive Intimacy', *The Times Literary Supplement*, no. 4639, 28 February 1992, p. 15, quoted in Paul Ginsborg, *Italy and Its Discontents. Family, Civil Society, State 1980-2001*, London: Allen Lane-Penguin Press, 2001, p.109. On the early impact of television see Stephen Gundle, 'L'americanizzazione del quotidiano: televisione e consumismo nell'Italia degli anni cinquanta', *Quaderni Storici*, Vol.21, 62 (1986), pp. 561-94.

that displayed in the other texts but the political roles are reversed: the son is the conformist, the father, the revolutionary).

The crisis of authority represented in these texts is ‘un aspetto fra i molti che dal momento politico [of 1968] si prolungarono nel privato’,<sup>25</sup> and yet none of them deals with the relationship between the young terrorists and the events of 1968, which is however one of the fundamental points in the debate on the origins of the phenomenon.<sup>26</sup>

## 2.2 Fathers and sons

### *Caro papà, caro bambino*<sup>27</sup>

Dino Risi, well-known as a non-political director of escapist films in the *commedia all'italiana* genre, was the first to tackle the theme of political violence through the motif of the decline in authority and the consequent intergenerational conflict. *Caro papà* was released in cinemas the year after the abduction of Moro. The director subsequently made clear that his intention had not been to make a film ‘sul terrorismo quanto un film “sentimentale”’, one which dramatized the ‘grande distanza, diventata oggi quasi incolmabile, che separa due generazioni, quella dei padri e quella dei figli’.<sup>28</sup> It was an attempt to depict an autobiography of the father’s generation and their relationship with their children.<sup>29</sup>

The *caro papà* of the title is a rich and successful industrialist, Albino Millozza (Vittorio Gassman), who, in Paolo D’Agostini’s words, is ‘della stessa discendenza

<sup>25</sup> Caracciolo, ‘Caratteristiche della vita privata nell’Italia contemporanea’, p. 26.

<sup>26</sup> Lumley, *States of Emergency*, p. 255.

<sup>27</sup> ‘caro bambino (caro papà)’ is the title of an article by Christian Viviani, *Positif. Revue de Cinema*, No. 222, September 1979, pp. 66-68.

<sup>28</sup> Quoted in Paolo D’Agostini, *Dino Risi*, Milan: Il Castoro Cinema, 1995, p. 102.

<sup>29</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 100-101.

degli ingegneri industriali di *In nome del popolo italiano* e di *La tigre*' (earlier films by Risi).<sup>30</sup> He lives in a splendid villa in Rome with a baroque interior, with his son Marco (Stefano Madia) and a platoon of Somali servants. The opulence of the bourgeois family is immediately evident. The family nucleus is asymmetrical. Millozza has a French lover while his wife is totally absent: she divides her time between sleep-cures and seasonal suicide attempts and lives not in Rome but, with her own lover, in Switzerland. Millozza is a self-made man, the son of a Tuscan peasant who seems to have repudiated his origins in abandoning his regional accent. He fought in the Resistance but has now gone over to the side of the 'bosses'.<sup>31</sup> His speeches to his son or about him and his friends express simplistic judgements and banal opinions on 'terrorism',

ridotto a farsa privata che vede nel sociale solo un momento di affrancamento dai problemi personali e quindi facilmente risolvibili con un diverso atteggiamento da parte di quei genitori ricchissimi, a volte dimentichi della prole.<sup>32</sup>

In the film, the theme of political violence is introduced for the first time through television news. The television on which a few moments earlier the family, which has gathered in Switzerland, had been watching their family videos, now transmits news of bloodshed:

vari attentati sono avvenuti nel corso della notte nelle sedi del partito comunista a Padova e Rovigo... Bombe sono scoppiate nelle sedi della DC a Roma,

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<sup>30</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 101.

<sup>31</sup> 'Ho anche combattuto per fare un' Italia migliore', says Millozza to his son's friends, who reply 'Ci avete rotto il cazzo con i partigiani'.

<sup>32</sup> g.gr. 'Caro papà', *Cinema Nuovo*, Vol. XVIII, No. 261, October 1979, p. 53.



Palermo e Trapani...A Genova un dirigente dell'Italsider è stato ferito gravemente alle gambe. L'attentato non è stato ancora rivendicato.

Immediately after the news broadcast and his mother's comment, 'Che orribile paese l'Italia!', Marco quotes a passage from Shakespeare which seems to be a premonition alluding to the fate of his father: 'finché ciascuno cadrà come tirato a sorte da una lotteria'.

Millozza appears not to have a satisfactory relationship with any of his children. He devotes all his attention on Marco and foists money on him (the pairing of paternity and money is present also, as we shall see, in *La tragedia di un uomo ridicolo*). Marco, however, is not interested in what his father wants to give him and instead criticizes everything that he has been offered in the past – the boarding school run by Irish monks, the swimming, tennis, classical dance – on the grounds that they are 'fuori dalla realtà'. Marco 'monetizzato per le carenze affettive sofferte', refuses his father's offers of money and also the way of life he proposes to him:<sup>33</sup>

Millozza: Non c'è mica niente di male ad accettare i soldi dal proprio padre, non ti voglio mica comprare.

Marco: No, sembra che per te l'unico problema siano i soldi.

Millozza: I soldi sono importanti, ragazzo mio...se per esempio ti chiedevo se avevi bisogno di affetto mi mandavi affanculo.

And again:

Marco: La noia è la punizione dei ricchi.

Millozza: Come se tu fossi di un'altra famiglia, come se fosse una colpa aver fatto dei soldi...Io capirei se fossi un cinico arrivista, ho

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<sup>33</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 53.

anche combattuto per fare un'Italia migliore. Se poi non è venuta tanto bene, non è mica colpa mia.

The reference to the Resistance is loaded with significance. First it was the fathers who took up arms; now the children are taking up arms, but against them. We could say, using the categories proposed by Claudio Pavone, that while the father identifies with the Resistance as a 'guerra patriottica', for the sons it is instead a 'guerra di classe' and they rebel even against their fathers who, in their eyes, have reneged on the values of the past by becoming 'padroni' (the same happens, as we shall see, in *La tragedia di un uomo ridicolo*).<sup>34</sup> It is worth recalling, in relation to this, that when the wave of 1968 hit Italian society it was directed at first precisely against the myth of the Resistance as giving birth to Republican Italy and to the constitutional cross-party consensus, against which the young generation rebelled.

Millozza begins to understand his son only when he starts secretly to read his diary and, from the information he picks up, at first fears and then becomes sure that he is implicated in the armed struggle. He decides then to dedicate himself to his son: 'ognuno si trova un hobby a una certa età: la pesca, il safari, la pittura...Io mi voglio dedicare alla riscoperta dei figli'. He begins to seek information from the servants on his son's habits and acquaintances, but without success. He even approaches one of his ex-girlfriends, who is a bit older, a former activist of 1968, but here too he gets no information. He decides then to speak directly to his son: 'voi giovani mi date l'impressione di un'oscurità che arriva tutta all'improvviso; sì, voi giovani diventate vecchi tutto d'un colpo'. But Marco will not reply to his father's simplistic and superficial statements on the youth of the 1970s.

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<sup>34</sup> See Claudio Pavone, *Una guerra civile. Saggio storico sulla moralità nella Resistenza*, Turin: Bollati Boringhieri, 1991, whose 'tre capitoli centrali potrebbero raggrupparsi sotto il titolo "Le tre guerre": patriottica, civile e di classe' (p. xix).

During the party to celebrate the opening of Millozza's new indoor swimming pool, some of the guests give their opinions on terrorism and terrorists, using banal psychological stereotypes:

Dunque il terrorista tipico è un temperamento orale, gli orali puri hanno avuto una situazione di conflitto coi genitori nella prima infanzia. Odiano ogni tipo di autorità, sono contestatori.

Another friend of the father, a kneecapped businessman, retorts:

Voi psicanalisti avete la brutta abitudine di tirare in ballo i genitori e l'utero materno, ma qui si tratta di un vero e proprio piano eversivo, altro che pipì a letto e temperamento orale!

Millozza's colleague, Parella, replies sharply, referring to his own daughter:

Non solo non mi interessa sapere chi frequenta quella stronza, ma è mia figlia stessa che non mi interessa più. (...) Sono dei miserabili, degli assassini, bisognerebbe sbatterli tutti al muro e sparargli nel culo (...) gli stalinisti non sono peggio dei veri nazisti? Fanno i processi, condannano a morte ed eseguono, vogliono cambiare il mondo ma cominciasse a cambiarsi la camicia! Ma facciano i seri, Cristo! Ma chi è che ama la vita, qua? Siamo noi! Noi crediamo in qualche cosa!

After the party, the father returns to his son's diary and reads: 'P. è stato condannato, all'unanimità meno uno, nessuna attenuante nonostante mia difesa'. Millozza, shaken, does not know what to do or who this refers to. He thinks of Parella, whereas in fact 'p' stands for 'papà', but he does not imagine that he himself is the condemned man. Seeking clarification he approaches Marco again but communication between the two seems impossible and another argument breaks out:

- Millozza: Ho conosciuto i tuoi amici e se vuoi saperlo non mi piacciono affatto (...) Lo so, questi cattivi compagni amano scherzare, ma gli scherzi a volte diventano pericolosi soprattutto quando chi li fa è gente che non sta a posto col cervello. (...) Io da adesso in poi intendo controllare la tua vita molto più da vicino, non ti permetto di lasciarti travolgere da questa pazzia che ci circonda (...). Tu sei un bambino, hai ventitré anni ma sei un bambino isterico, mi vergogno di te.
- Marco: Sono io che mi vergogno di te.

At the end of the film, during a business trip to Canada, Millozza is kneecapped by one of Marco's comrades, whose face is covered by a mask, despite his son's belated attempt to alert him to the danger and save him. The concluding sequence seems to suggest a rapprochement between the son, who is in tears, and his father who returns home from hospital after the attack. One can see Marco less as a 'repentant revolutionary' than as the boy who has grown up, who has killed the figure of the father-boss within himself and who draws closer to his father only when he is in need of help and protection.

The film seems to be suggesting that a possible cause of left terrorism lies in the father-son relationship, in the conflict between overbearing father-boss and rebellious son. The sources of the rebellion are not completely explained but the film suggests that it is perhaps due to a lack of affection (absent mother, distant father) and the attenuation of the paternal role. In this respect *Caro papà* bears out the director's claim that it is 'un film "sentimentale"' rather than a study of the social and political roots of left political violence. As for the relation between terrorism and Italian society, the film on the one hand suggests that terrorism may have arisen within Italy out of a rebellion against the myth of the 'Repubblica nata dalla Resistenza', while on the other it implicitly projects the historical roots of terrorism outside Italy and suggests a crisis of Italian identity in

the face of it. Millozza, in fact, often speaks in English and French; he has a French lover and is attacked by the terrorists while in Canada. These factors which evoke a place 'elsewhere' are also to be found in the other texts analysed here: in *La tragedia di un uomo ridicolo* Spaggiari's wife is French; in *Colpire al cuore* Dario's wife is a translator; in *Caro Michele* Michele dies in Belgium after having been in London; his sister Angelica uses both English and French to talk to his friends about him and receives the news of his death from someone speaking German.

### *La tragedia di un uomo ridicolo*

In chronological order, *La tragedia di un uomo ridicolo* (1981) is the second film to evoke the theme of political violence through the motif of generational conflict between father and son.<sup>35</sup> Although the director, Bernardo Bertolucci, stated in an interview at the time that he considered it impossible 'fare un film sull'Italia di oggi che non sia in qualche modo anche un film sul terrorismo', the references in the film to the Italian political situation, or more precisely to the years of the armed struggle, are for the most part fleeting and sometimes also incongruous and contradictory.<sup>36</sup> Ambiguity in family relationships seems to be used to represent the compromises and tragic ambiguities of historical and social reality. Just as in *Caro papà*, where the father, emblem of capitalist

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<sup>35</sup> As Jefferson T. Kline has noted, stylistically *La tragedia di un uomo ridicolo* opens a new phase in Bertolucci's cinema: see *Bertolucci's Dream Loom: A Psychoanalytic Study of Cinema*, Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1987, p. 64. However, it is worth recalling that, thematically, the father-son relationship had also been central to *La strategia del ragno* (1970), in which father and son were played by the same actor, Giulio Brogi, and, in a figurative sense, also to *Il conformista* (1970), in which Marcello Clerici (Jean-Louis Trintignant) tracks down and kills his symbolic father, his former university teacher and anti-fascist activist, Professor Quadri. In *La strategia del ragno* the son travels to the small town where his father was killed to find those responsible, but ends up learning that his father had in fact betrayed his anti-fascist comrades, with whom he had conspired to assassinate Mussolini. After they discovered the betrayal he had agreed to be killed by them provided that they did not let the truth about his betrayal come out, so that he would die as a hero, not a traitor, and his death would help the anti-fascist cause. In *La tragedia* it is the son who organizes his own abduction; in the earlier film it was the father who stage-managed his own death. In this way both films also stimulate a reflection on reality and appearances.

<sup>36</sup> Enzo Ungari, *Scene madri di Bernardo Bertolucci*, Milan: Ubulibri, 1982, pp. 215-23.

society, was introduced in one of the first shots at a conference with representatives of the major multinationals, so in Bertolucci's film, *Primo Spaggiari* (Ugo Tognazzi), the ex-partisan, is shown in the first sequence within his own world – more provincial, but still a symbol of capitalism –, namely his *caseificio*, a factory which makes dairy products and other farm goods. In fact, it is from the terrace of the *caseificio* that he helplessly witnesses the abduction of his son Giovanni (Ricky Tognazzi) by a group of hooded men dressed in black. Terrorists? This is what Primo believes, but it is not clear. From this moment, however, a series of other events unfold in which the lives of Primo Spaggiari and his wife Barbara (Anouk Aimée) become tangled up in a mesh of secrets and uncertainties. Two characters act as go-betweens between them and their son: Giovanni's girlfriend, Laura (Laura Morante), and his friend, Adelfo (Victor Cavallo), both of whom are also tied to Primo because they work in the *caseificio*. Gradually, as the plot and the psychology of his characters evolve, we are led to understand that it was Giovanni, himself, helped by Laura and Adelfo, who organized the kidnapping, putting on a clever show aimed at extracting money, perhaps for their illegal activities. Are Laura, Adelfo and Giovanni terrorists? Adelfo says so but almost as if it was an unexpected discovery, rather than a choice: 'Certe volte penso che i veri terroristi siamo noi'.

In the first shot, Primo Spaggiari is introduced at the end of his birthday party, surrounded by the desolation following the celebration: the remains of the meal, crumpled wrapping paper, a general atmosphere of weariness. It is his fiftieth birthday party, a time to take stock. His thoughts turn quickly to the past as he looks at one of his photographs from twenty-five years earlier and barely recognizes himself.

A 'perfetto industrialotto cafone' ('vulgar little industrialist') is how he is described by his son, who has sent a present and a card, in which one can already detect

all his angry feelings towards his father, despite their being cushioned by the ironic sign-off 'your most affectionate son'. Primo opens the present and finds that his son has given into his whims, despite criticizing him: it is a sailor's hat, binoculars and flare pistol that he can use on his new boat.<sup>37</sup> Primo looks at himself in the mirror, after putting on the hat, and says to himself: 'Lo so che sono ridicolo. L'ho scoperto quando avevo cinque anni. Però, ho il mio stile'. These are the first words with which he defines himself: he is attached to his own dreams but his feet are squarely on the ground. The mirror is a symbol which often accompanies introspection (it is used also in *Segreti segreti*): it suggests looking into oneself but also a doubling of the personality, the presence of other 'selves' faceted and reflected. The use throughout of Primo's voiceover means that we are constantly aware of his thoughts and his feelings and proceed through the film from his point of view, confused and teetering like him.

To try out the binoculars he goes up onto the roof of the *caseificio* and it is from there that he sees his son being abducted. It is a tragic irony that the instrument that should make him see things more clearly and sharply deceives him. Right from the top of his 'kingdom' he watches – in a 'scene of voyeurism', where he himself is unseen<sup>38</sup> – the private deception that will attack his economic and family life. Indeed an extremely high ransom will be demanded of him (perhaps by his son himself and by the latter's group) to get his son back. Along with the emotional shock he experiences goes the fear (equally human, perhaps, but less noble) that in order to pay the ransom he will lose everything he owns: his *caseificio* and his luxurious house, which symbolize his social status.

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<sup>37</sup> Adriano Piccardi describes the birthday present as a 'segno ambiguo d'affetto e d'irrisione'. 'La tragedia di un uomo ridicolo di Bernardo Bertolucci', *Cineforum*, Vol. XXI, No. 209, November 1981, p. 58.

<sup>38</sup> Kline, *Bertolucci's Dream Loom*, p.163.

The mother, Barbara, immediately demonstrates her unconditional desire to do everything possible to have Giovanni returned. 'Salvare Giovanni sarebbe come suicidarsi', Primo says more than once. The mother's love is unconditional while the father, who identifies himself with what he possesses, cannot bear the idea of having to separate himself from it. Barbara now does not understand him: 'come sei invecchiato, Primo, sei patetico. Mi hai deluso, non so se sei più pazzo o più ridicolo'. The estrangement and difference in viewpoint between them are exacerbated as the story progresses:

- Primo: I figli che ci circondano sono dei mostri. Più pallidi di come eravamo noi (...). Trattano i padri con troppo rispetto oppure con troppo disprezzo. Non sono più capaci di ridere, sghignazzano o sono cupi. E soprattutto non parlano più. E noi non sappiamo capire dai loro silenzi se chiedono aiuto o se stanno per spararti addosso.
- Barbara: Giovanni non è pallido. Ha degli occhi bellissimi, sa parlare meglio di noi. Giovanni non è un criminale. Giovanni è innocente.

The letters from Giovanni giving the instructions for the ransom are addressed only to his mother. To his father there is no greeting, not even an acknowledgement of his presence. It is he who reads out the second letter: 'Cara mamma, non mi trattano troppo male, di notte mi piscio addosso come da bambino (...) Un forte abbraccio anche a papà'. But he has to admit straight away that this last sentence is not there: 'No, questo non c'è, l'ho aggiunto io'; again the unresolved conflict between the two is emphasised.

Spaggiari, as the oxymoron in the title indicates, really is a 'ridiculous hero': a victim both of what he has generated – his son and his *caseificio*, which he wants to save at all costs – and of his social and economic standing, which he has expended so



much energy to attain. By Bertolucci's own definition, 'l'uomo ridicolo è quasi un santo profano, spiritoso invece che spirituale'; he is hero and victim of his own utopia.<sup>39</sup> *La tragedia* might be seen in this respect as a sequel to *Novecento* (1976), since the adult Olmo (Gérard Depardieu) there and Primo here are both carried by the impetus of their own utopia, despite the fact that *Novecento*'s Resistance story looks to the future whereas the action of *La tragedia* takes place in a sometimes dreamlike present. Olmo in 1945 'fa il processo al padrone e dichiara che la proprietà è finita per sempre', whereas Primo is the self-made 'padrone', ready to use even the supposed death of his son to try to improve the fortunes of his business.<sup>40</sup> He is an 'acrobat' who throughout the story 'sfiora l'abisso' and then devises a plan to redeem his own fate, a plan with which he believes it is he who can deceive others – terrorists and money-lenders alike.<sup>41</sup>

Primo's 'crazy idea', his 'unmentionable project', is to get together the ransom money, even though it appears Giovanni is already dead, and then invest it in the *caseificio*. It is a plan which exploits the situation initiated by the terrorists and turns it to the boss's advantage.<sup>42</sup> He goes to discuss it with Laura and Adelfo, seeking their collaboration. He meets them in the pigsty, of which Adelfo is in charge. While the three are speaking, the pigs are killed, almost as if to represent, according to Robert Kolker's interpretation, the fate that lies in wait for capitalism. The scene with the pigs might also allude to the communiqués of the Red Brigades and the coded language they used to designate their targets with the names of animals.<sup>43</sup> Using his son as 'fertilizer' for the *caseificio*, he does everything to avoid falling victim to the kidnappers' ransom

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<sup>39</sup> Piccardi, 'La tragedia di un uomo ridicolo di Bernardo Bertolucci', p. 60.

<sup>40</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 62.

<sup>41</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 61.

<sup>42</sup> See Christopher Wagstaff, 'Bertolucci: An Italian intellectual of the 1970s looks at Italy's Fascist past', in Graham Bartram (ed.), *Reconstructing the Past. Representations of the Fascist Era in Postwar European Culture*, Keele: Keele University Press, 1996, pp. 201-213.

<sup>43</sup> Robert Philip Kolker, *Bernardo Bertolucci*, London: British Film Institute, 1985, p. 179.

demands, which are themselves enmeshed in a 'capitalistic' mechanism involving the extraction of surplus value. He wants to rebel against this mechanism in the name of the *caseificio* which represents his life, declaring, in a clear identification of his being with his property, 'piuttosto che vendere il caseificio, mi suiciderei'. If signs of the Oedipus complex may be clearly seen in Giovanni's aggressive behaviour towards his father, in the father's actions one can identify, as Fabrizio Deriu suggests, elements of a 'Cronus' or 'Uranus' complex.<sup>44</sup> Despite this, Primo Spaggiari gains our sympathy, particularly at the end, maybe because we can identify better with his state of ignorance – at the mercy of a phenomenon whose boundaries he can no longer recognize and which sometimes seems to him to be only a bad dream.

Laura even tries to seduce Primo one day at Adelfo's house where he has gone to get news of his son. She makes him even more 'ridiculous' and confused, confiding to him that 'Giovanni è un po' geloso di te'. In this sequence we may detect that 'triangle of desire' mentioned earlier where attraction towards the same woman by two men is essentially the expression of a rivalry between the men that constitutes the heart of the narrative.<sup>45</sup>

It is Adelfo who tells Primo and Laura that Giovanni is dead. On hearing the news Laura remarks, turning to Primo: 'Ti è andata bene. Tu non sai quante volte Giovanni ha pensato di rapirti'. Primo feels contrasting emotions: 'Insieme al dolore provavo un sentimento sordo, quasi di vendetta'. At this point, Laura says to Adelfo that she has a plan which not even the 'boss' knows about and which she will not reveal even to Adelfo. The ending is ambiguous. Primo believes he is carrying out his plan and forges the ransom letter, together with Laura and Adelfo. He then leaves the bag with

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<sup>44</sup> Fabrizio Deriu, 'La tragedia di un uomo ridicolo di B. Bertolucci. Il complesso di Crono', in Lino Micciché (ed.), *Schermi opachi. Il cinema italiano degli anni '80*, Venice: Marsilio, 1998, pp. 281-282.

<sup>45</sup> See Sedgwick, *Between Men*, for whom this rivalry and bonding between men is typical of the male-centered tradition of the high-cultural European novel.

the money in the place agreed. Laura and Adelfo take it and, without saying anything, lead him to a dance hall from where, as he looks out, he sees his son dancing with Barbara and Laura. Confused, he approaches his son, who kisses him coldly. His words, spoken off camera, remain:

È proprio lui, non è il suo fantasma. Ma sì, è tutto chiaro, coi soldi hanno pagato il riscatto e Giovanni è tornato vivo. Pagato a chi? (...) Ma no, l'unica cosa che conta è che Giovanni è vivo e sta bene. Il compito di scoprire l'enigma di un figlio rapito, morto e resuscitato lo lascio a voi, io preferisco non saperlo.

He goes to fetch some champagne to celebrate, or perhaps he just wants to escape. This dreamlike ending leaves unanswered the questions about why the son should have organized this deception against his own father and who the 'terrorists' really are.

### *Colpire al cuore*

*Colpire al cuore*, released in 1982, tells the story of the rebellion of a son, Emilio (Fausto Rossi), against his father, Dario (Jean-Louis Trintignant), who teaches at the Università Cattolica in Milan. Its plot is in this sense the reverse of those of *Caro papà* and *La tragedia di un uomo ridicolo*. Emilio is not a son who rebels against a bourgeois father who represents the power of capitalist society and the state but a spirited reactionary who believes in the Law, while his father, an ex-partisan, is a sympathiser and supporter of a group of young people implicated in the armed struggle. A conflict between the two is inevitable and the title, which refers to the Red Brigades' well-known slogan 'Colpire al cuore dello stato', may be taken to allude both to left terrorism and to the son's aggression directed against the father. The film's director, Gianni Amelio, explains:

Ho voluto riflettere sulla realtà in maniera non schematica. La domanda che mi sono posto, quando scrivevo il soggetto, è stata questa: come è nato il terrorismo? E come è vissuto dalle persone che ne restano coinvolte? A quel punto ho voluto scavare un po' all'interno del problema, ma non per rappresentarlo come un paradosso, non per andare contro la comune opinione, e ho voluto mettere in scena il conflitto tra due generazioni.<sup>46</sup>

Amelio's intention was thus to concentrate on the causes of terrorism ('come è nato il terrorismo?') in order to arrive at a representation of its effects ('come è vissuto...?'), in other words its impact on the family, without wishing, necessarily, to make these coincide with the causes. He wanted to show the reactions to the phenomenon of political violence from the point of view of a son who has not had that intellectual education that his father thought he had given him.<sup>47</sup> The film, however, does not take an explicitly critical stance towards the anti-terrorist witch hunt of the time, as Amelio said he had initially thought of doing.<sup>48</sup> For that reason, he does not only take the side of the father but tries also to represent the motives of Emilio, the troubled and taciturn fifteen-year-old son of a leftist university teacher.<sup>49</sup>

While Dario and Emilio are visiting Dario's mother's villa in the countryside near Bergamo, an ex-student of his father's, Sandro (Vanni Corbellini), with his girlfriend, Giulia (Laura Morante) and their baby, come to see Dario and occupy his attention, provoking Emilio's jealousy. Emilio then sees Sandro again a few days later

<sup>46</sup> Mario Sesti and Stefanella Ughi (eds), *Gianni Amelio*, Rome: Dino Audino Editore, 1994, p. 33.

<sup>47</sup> Emilio's name is perhaps an ironic echo of that of the boy brought up according to the ways of nature in Rousseau's classic work *Émile, ou de l'Éducation* (1762).

<sup>48</sup> Amelio stated that the film was originally conceived as a reaction against 'un clima da caccia alle streghe che noi [he and Vincenzo Cerami, his co-screenwriter] credevamo d'intuire. Contro la demonizzazione dei "cattivi maestri"'. Quoted in Gianni Volpi, 'Materiali: Filmografia e interviste', in Gianni Volpi (ed.), *Gianni Amelio*, Turin: Scriptorium, 1995, p. 114.

<sup>49</sup> At a certain point in the film the son goes to see his father at the university and enters the lecture hall where he is reading aloud in French a poem by Nerval (the recurrent 'foreign' element). It has been pointed out to me that this is one of Nerval's lesser known and less good poems. It is possible that this choice of text was made for technical reasons of film time, but it might also reveal an intention of showing the father's lack of ability as 'teacher', as 'master'.

in Milan, lying dead on the roadside, shot by the police after he has killed the manager of a big company in an attack. From that moment on, Emilio begins to suspect that his father might be implicated in the armed struggle too and he follows him, looking for incriminating evidence. After some verbal showdowns with his father, which do not manage to reassure him, he decides to report both him and Giulia.

This is the plot of the film. Let us now analyse some key sequences. The first shots introduce father and son moving towards camera along on a path, the former jogging, the latter on a bicycle. This sequence is valuable because it is a metaphor of their relationship. The father is running, but he is behind Emilio. He catches up, tries to establish contact, turns towards him, tells him a joke, tries to make him laugh but Emilio remains serious.<sup>50</sup> A little later, when they stop, it is Emilio who wants to establish contact with his father and begins a game they used to play together when he was little: 'Sono gli anagrammi. Quando ero piccolo mi facevi una testa così'; 'Me lo ricordo benissimo' replies his father – in an attempt to rediscover a point of contact, if only in memory. Later we see Emilio again at the grandmother's villa. He is speaking to Sandro from whom, by looking through some photos, he learns some details of his father's life:

Sandro:	Voglio vedere se riconosci qualcuno in questa foto. Secondo te questo chi è?
Emilio:	È mio padre. Doveva avere più o meno la mia età.
Sandro:	E già andava in giro armato...
Emilio:	Armato?
Sandro:	Sì, se guardi bene, imbraccia uno Sten.
Emilio:	Un mitra?
Sandro:	Be', per modo di dire. Non c'era niente di meglio all'epoca. Oggi lo useremmo come scacciacani.
Emilio:	Non si vede molto bene, è un po' sfocato. Potrebbe essere un bastone, o forse un mitra...C'era la guerra!

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<sup>50</sup> Marco Turco quotes this scene in *Vite in sospenso* (see Chapter 4).

Sandro: 11 giugno '45. La guerra era finita da un pezzo. C'era la caccia ai fascisti, alle spie, ai traditori...Ne hanno messi al muro tanti, sai?  
 Emilio: Figurati mio padre che mette al muro qualcuno! Al muro ci avrà messo i manifesti o qualche scritta: Abbasso i fascisti! Via lo straniero!<sup>51</sup>

Emilio is incredulous and defends his father against Sandro's insinuations, perhaps also to defend himself.

It is interesting to note that this sequence, which dents the image Emilio has formed of his father, is set in the countryside, in the house where his father was born and in the playroom he had when he was little. Sandro and Giulia are the link between the obscure parts of Dario's life and Emilio, who is at first jealous of them and then curious to understand the nature of their relationship. It is in this house in the country that a sequence takes place which illustrates very effectively the distance between Emilio and the other three. From a window of the villa Emilio photographs them without their being aware of it and does not go out to join them. Emilio, according to the treatment for the film, written by Amelio and Vincenzo Cerami, 'non si compromette nel mondo, al più lo ritrae con la macchina fotografica'.<sup>52</sup> He then turns on an old gramophone and positions it near the window. The music attracts the attention of the three who jump to their feet in the garden, lined up in front of the window. The camera shoots them from behind so that they are looking at Emilio but with their backs to the spectator. Two rows, two different ways of thinking and living, which the film will gradually delineate with increasing clarity. As far as Emilio is concerned, Sandro and Giulia are 'others' and, from the moment he suspects his father is concealing some secrets, he begins to perceive him as 'other' too. The return journey from the house in

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<sup>51</sup> Gianni Amelio and Vincenzo Cerami, *Colpire al cuore. Trattamento e sceneggiature dell'omonimo film di Amelio*, Mantua: Circolo del Cinema, 1996, p.

<sup>52</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 7.

the country to Milan is for Emilio a missed opportunity for a conversation with his father, who decides to make the trip with Sandro in another car. Emilio is with Giulia and her baby and he says: 'Avranno dei segreti! (...) Loro parlano di politica, di letteratura...Noi invece di cosa potremmo parlare?'

When Emilio recognizes Sandro on the ground, dead in the centre of Milan, the tension between father and son becomes extreme. The television announces:

Attentato terroristico questa sera poco dopo le diciotto a Milano. Un dirigente della Steal Corporation, un'azienda produttrice di acciai e laminati, è stato ucciso con cinque colpi di pistola da terroristi delle Brigate Rosse (...). Dopo aver commesso il mortale attentato, il terrorista è riuscito a dileguarsi insieme a dei complici che lo aspettavano in macchina (...). I tre hanno poi proseguito la fuga (...). (...) la macchina dei fuggiaschi è stata identificata e bloccata da una pattuglia dei carabinieri. Due dei terroristi sono riusciti a fuggire, un terzo ha aperto il fuoco, uccidendo un brigadiere di ventisei anni e un carabiniere di ventidue, il quale, prima di essere mortalmente colpito, è riuscito a fermare il terrorista colpendolo a sua volta.<sup>53</sup>

Emilio's suspicion that his father is involved, in some way, in the killing gradually becomes a certainty. Feeling betrayed by his only point of reference, whom he had thought incapable of error, by an authority which he now sees as split off from the paternal role, he goes to police headquarters to make a formal identification of the dead terrorist and reveal that his father knew him. The police then bring Dario in for questioning. He and Emilio are both released in the morning. This time they travel home by car together but they do not speak. At home, Dario accuses Emilio of having wasted his and the police's time and reminds him of when he was eight and of the sense of guilt he had felt after having informed on one of his schoolmates: 'avevi fatto il tuo dovere e poi avevi pianto tutto il giorno'. But Emilio does not accept being treated like a

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<sup>53</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 134, 135.

child who has made a mistake. At first he replies 'Io non ho fatto la spia'; then he asks: 'Lo sapevi che Ferrari [Sandro] era un terrorista o no?'. Dario's reply is ambiguous: 'Sapevo solo che era malato. Nella testa'. Communication between the two does not seem possible: Emilio cannot understand his father's words; he condemns him; he wants to dissociate himself from him; and he decides to continue following him to collect proof against him. They have a second altercation when Dario finds Emilio, who has run away from home, and he attacks him for having photographed himself and Giulia, for whom the police are now looking, while following them:

Lo sai che foto come questa sono la specialità dei delinquenti? (...) Ma tu non stai dalla parte dei delinquenti, tu stai dalla parte della legge! Le forze dell'ordine t'hanno assunto come fotografo ufficiale? Sennò non si capisce.<sup>54</sup>

His anger and sarcasm alternate in his desire to understand his son's motives:

Dario: Vorrei solamente capire...Vorrei sapere perché ce l'hai con me. Che cosa ti ho fatto?...Vorrei che tu mi dicessi che cos'è che mi rimproveri...Che cosa ti aspetti da me? Vorresti un padre che ti dicesse dov'è il bene e dov'è il male? Piacerebbe anche a me...Ma padri così perfetti non ce ne sono più!

Emilio: Figli perfetti ancora meno!

Dario: Dunque sono io che ho sbagliato...Allora non ti resta che darmi un voto. Quanto mi merito, la sufficienza o nemmeno quella?

Emilio: Oggi non si boccia più nessuno.<sup>55</sup>

Once again communication between the two does not seem possible. Their perspectives are different, their roles inverted. Dario harbours anger which makes him continue to attack Emilio, who remains silent or replies in monosyllables:

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<sup>54</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 151.

<sup>55</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 151.



Questa è la tua carta d'identità! Sì, sei tu! Quando l'hai fatta questa fotografia? Guarda che faccia da ragazzino che avevi!... Adesso invece sei grande! Sei già in grado di giudicare, adesso! E hai i tuoi metodi personali...Adesso ti metti a frugare nei panni sporchi, stai ad ascoltare da dietro le porte, guardi dal buco della serratura! Ma, lo sai, non è la verità...non è la verità che si vede dal buco della serratura! Dal buco della serratura sembriamo tutti ladri, tutti assassini...E invece non è vero, non siamo tutti così!<sup>56</sup>

In the end Dario, in a burst of exasperation, says to Emilio:

Che cosa ti abbiamo insegnato? (...) Non ho mai voluto fare il padre, ma...a partire da adesso voglio farlo, farlo sul serio, proprio come vuoi tu! (...) Ti starò addosso, non ti lascerò più respirare! Voglio sapere tutto di te, tutto quello che fai! Che genere di persone frequenti... Voglio sapere come ti comporti con i tuoi amici, come te la cavi con le ragazze...Mi devi dire cosa fai quando non ti vede nessuno, e a cosa pensi quando te ne stai zitto...Voglio controllare che tu non sbagli mai...perché al primo passo falso io sarò là, sarò là a fare il padre!...E poi quando sarai più grande...il padre te lo farai da solo!<sup>57</sup>

After these harsh words, Dario hugs Emilio but Emilio remains rigid, immobile, almost paralysed before the painful spectacle of his fathers' weakness and confusion. The following sequences show the arrest of Giulia and of Dario.

The role of the woman, Giulia, is to some extent to be part of a 'triangle of desire' with Dario and Emilio. There are, however, other elements to her role in the story. As the mother of a small child she introduces the motif of the need to explain the choice of armed struggle to one's children. 'Che cosa gli racconterò quando sarà grande? Che suo padre ammazzava la gente e che io non dicevo nulla?' she asks Dario. This motif will recur frequently in narratives produced by and about former activists, as we shall see in Chapter Four.

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<sup>56</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 153.

<sup>57</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 154, 155.

As for Emilio's mother, she is an non-existent figure within the life of the family, in her relationship with her children and with her husband. She does translation work at home, which seems to isolate her from everything else.<sup>58</sup> This closure of his mother contributes to Emilio's own isolation, which begins within the family itself. When he realizes what his father is mixed up in, he tries in vain to speak to his mother about it. Completely engrossed in her work, symbolically represented by her earphones, she is not able either to listen or, therefore, to help her son in his moment of need, nor to hear the insults that he heaps on her immediately afterwards: 'Stupida! Stupida! Sei una povera stupida (...) Scimmia! Sciocca! Scema! (...) Non sai niente, niente di niente. Niente di niente di niente...beata te!'. The other mothers in the story are absent or lacking in some way. Dario's mother is represented as a slightly mad old lady and Giulia, after her arrest, cannot fulfil her maternal role to her son.

An interesting background text to the film is the *Diario di Emilio*, which was included in the early treatment written by Amelio and Cerami as part of their attempt to clarify 'il mondo del ragazzo, "le ragioni" del suo gesto clamoroso'.<sup>59</sup> The diary, which has Emilio expose his feelings (which remain largely hidden or at least not clearly articulated in the finished film), shows how the screenwriters conceived of the figure of Emilio as a rebellious son who has decided that he can no longer trust his father, disowning him and excluding him not only from his life but also from the social context. He is a loner who speaks with detachment of his school friends, with superiority about his girlfriend, about his music teacher and about his father, with whom he has a painful relationship:

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<sup>58</sup> The mother here fits into the already mentioned pattern of wives or lovers of the fathers who are foreign or who, as in this case, through translation work, carry out an activity which links them to a world 'elsewhere'. Here perhaps the implication is also that the mother's 'alterity' is the symptom of a deficit in the mediating role she should play between father and son.

<sup>59</sup> Amelio and Cerami, *Colpire al cuore. Trattamento e sceneggiature*, p. 114.

Tra padre e figlio, bisogna essere amici, si dice questo. Io dico di no. Io dico che i legami più seri sono quelli legati agli ideali, il sangue non significa niente, è un puro accidente. Perché dovrei andare d'accordo con mio padre, solo perché è mio padre?<sup>60</sup>

Emilio's character clearly expresses the unease caused by the slow disintegration of paternal authority. At the same time his own behaviour contributes to this disintegration. Once again this shows the collapse of authority in the private sphere. Emilio's father seems to be 'affranto, indifeso, debole'. The man before him is far from his image of the ideal father, and he not only repudiates him but attacks him as the 'vittima di una grave degradazione'.<sup>61</sup> If the *Diario di Emilio* is taken to be a record of the writers' intentions about his character, then the entry quoted above ('il sangue non significa niente', etc.) is the first piece of the puzzle which enables us to understand how Emilio arrives at the decision to report his father. In the pages of his diary, as well as his judgement on the trivial value of blood ties, he is disappointed in his father, not only because they do not share the same ideals but also because he feels that his relationship with one of his ex-students, Laura, who could be his daughter, is unworthy.<sup>62</sup> Inspired by an abstract idea of justice, he feels the need to tell his mother about his father's affair, but she, instead of being grateful for the revelation, reproaches him: 'Sei stato molto bravo, capisco cosa ti ha spinto a mettere chiarezza tra me e tuo padre. Ma i nostri problemi, ti prego, lasciali a noi!'.<sup>63</sup> Although his mother condemns his first, private, act as an informer, Emilio persists in his role as inquisitor and dispenser of justice, which culminates in the public disclosure of his father's secret

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<sup>60</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 27.

<sup>61</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 33, 40.

<sup>62</sup> It is not clear in the film whether the father's relationship with Laura is simply a friendship or something more.

<sup>63</sup> Amelio and Cerami, *Colpire al cuore. Trattamento e sceneggiature*, p. 30.

political activity at the end. In the diary there are numerous references, not included in the finished film, to left terrorism, which Emilio judges harshly:

Il terrorismo è una grande nebbia, che piano piano copre tutto. Fino ad ora sono stato alla finestra, e ho visto questo nuvolone bianco che si avvicinava, implacabilmente. Oggi questa grande nebbia è entrata in casa.<sup>64</sup>

It is a short step from this to his decision to denounce his father.

*Colpire al cuore* was made towards the end of the worst phase of terrorist violence. It is an intriguing and ambiguous film. It is not entirely clear whether Amelio wanted to express, if only indirectly and ironically, through the disturbing figure of Emilio, hope for change in the new generation, or to make a negative comment on the climate of 'grassing' that was then becoming widespread. It is also worth noting that the film makes an interesting comment on the social origins of left terrorism. In one of the long sequences, almost without dialogue, when Emilio is following Giulia, he enters the empty and crumbling housing estate where she lives, and there is a shot of a huge pro-Red Brigades wall slogan.

From the analysis of the three texts in this first part of the chapter we can define some recurring characteristics in the portrayal of political violence through the prism of the father-son conflict. Above all, the basic reason for the son's rebellion seems to be that the father is no longer a moral guide but has become simply a breadwinner, a representative of economic values (all the fathers are well-off and are often shown in the act of offering money to their children). As a result, he no longer stands in a 'vertical' relationship to his children and this increases the possibility of conflict.<sup>65</sup> We

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<sup>64</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 30

<sup>65</sup> Zoja, *The Father*, p. 272.

thus see represented that degeneration of intergenerational relations which accompanies the decline in paternal authority. The children do not recognize the father as mentor. On the contrary, they perceive him (in the first two of the three texts analysed) as betraying the ideals of the Resistance, in which he himself took part and which they consider as a model. Alongside the representation of the rebellion against the father goes that of a family situation characterized by lack of affection in which the mother is a marginal figure. The mother can also be the third element in a triangle of desire who serves to focus attention on the central oedipal rivalry between father and son. It is against this background that the representation of the son's involvement in the armed struggle emerges. These texts, similarly to some of those we examined in Chapter One, do not seem capable of representing either multiple reasons or intrinsically political reasons for the choice of political violence. Instead, this choice is reduced to an impetus of rebellion against paternal authority or seen as the result of a broken family (*Caro papà*) or, in the case of the terrorists in *Colpire al cuore*, as the effect of a confused sense of continuity with the ideals of the Resistance.

### 2.3 Mothers and sons/daughters

#### *Segreti segreti*

In *Caro papà*, *La tragedia di un uomo ridicolo* and *Colpire al cuore* political violence was examined through the clash between father and sons and the mother remained a marginal figure. However, there is another group of texts which focus on the relationship between mothers and children. This tends to be represented in a less conflictual way than that of father and son. Between mother and son or mother and

daughter there are no clashes of power, rivalry and opposing desires. Rather, everything revolves around difficulties in reciprocal understanding and the partial and painful acceptance of different, irreconcilable values. These texts are about the recognition of an insurmountable distance between parent and child, without even the allusion to the possibility of rapprochement which the ambiguous endings of *Caro papà* and *La tragedia di un uomo ridicolo* left open.

In *Segreti segreti* (1985) all the main characters are women and the theme of political violence is conveyed through the effects that the choice of the armed struggle produces on the mother-daughter pair. As the director, Giuseppe Bertolucci, stated in an interview at the time of the film's release:

ho tentato di vedere gli effetti che il terrorismo, in questo caso, ma anche altri mali sociali in altri casi, hanno sul tessuto civile e politico in cui viviamo quotidianamente. Gli effetti sono più interessanti delle cause, ecco il punto.<sup>66</sup>

Giovanni Buttafava has spoken of the 'antiarchitettura' of Bertolucci, of a 'frammentarietà cosciente'.<sup>67</sup> The film's structure is, at times, 'chaotic', dense with interconnections and anticipations. One wonders whether this chaos and fragmentation might not be the result of Bertolucci drawing on the stereotype of the maternal/feminine as chaos as opposed to the paternal/masculine as principle of order. The chaos is that of the lives of the two main female figures, Laura (Lina Sastri) and Rosa (Giulia Boschi), around whom the stories of the other women – mothers or daughters – revolve. The surrounding countryside is the area strewn with the rubble left by the earthquake in

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<sup>66</sup> The statement is reported in Nuccio Lodato, 'Segreti segreti di Giuseppe Bertolucci', *Cineforum*, Vol. XXV, No. 8 (246), August 1985, p. 59.

<sup>67</sup> Giovanni Buttafava, 'Segreti segreti: l'antiarchitettura di Giovanni Bertolucci', *Bianco e Nero*, Vol. XLVI, No. 3, July -September 1985, p. 100.

Irpinia, which appears to function symbolically to represent the detritus produced by the political violence of the 1980s. This is an Italy already dominated by the television networks and by radio and their transmissions divide up the sequences of the film and give it its temporal coordinates: forty-eight hours, from the morning when a judge in Venice is killed to the interrogation of the terrorist, Laura, two days later: the morning, as the radio announces, of the feast day of Saint Leopold (San Leopoldo).<sup>68</sup>

The story opens with a double murder. After having killed (morning of Day One) both the judge and her comrade Pietro (the latter had been wounded in the attack and was 'finished off' so as not to leave a witness), Laura escapes and returns to her childhood home, where she finds her former nanny, Gina (Alida Valli). The television transmits news of the crime. Gina guesses Laura's secret without the latter saying anything and the next day (Day Two) Gina decides to leave forever. Laura then goes to Rome where she visits a friend, Renata (Stefania Sandrelli), in hospital. Renata has attempted suicide and Laura goes to her house to be with her teenage daughter, Francesca (Sandra Ceccarelli) (background/subtext on the television set: Pasolini's *Mamma Roma*).<sup>69</sup> Laura's mother, Marta (Lea Massari), goes to find her there and then returns to her own home, where the next day Laura will come to pick her up and go with her to the airport. When she gets home that night (between Day Two and Day Three) Marta finds a group of policemen waiting for Laura: they tell her of the charges her daughter faces: 'duplice omicidio e costituzione di banda armata'. After having passed a sleepless night, Marta kills herself by throwing herself from the window shortly before

<sup>68</sup> There are discrepant accounts of the film's timespan. Leonardo De Franceschi, 'Segreti segreti di G. Bertolucci. Figurazioni dell'enigma', in Micciché (ed) *Schermi opachi. Il cinema italiano degli anni '80*, pp. 283, 285, talks 'di un week-end autunnale, dal 13 al 16 novembre 1981', whereas according to Nuccio Lodato, in 'Segreti segreti di Giuseppe Bertolucci' (p. 56), the action takes place in a period of less than 48 hours.

<sup>69</sup> This is perhaps at once a filmic homage to Pasolini and the evocation of a period in which motherhood was lived with greater innocence: see Buttafava, 'Segreti segreti: l'antiarchitettura di G. Bertolucci', p. 104.

Laura, as they had agreed, arrives in the car to take her to the airport. Laura is arrested and taken to police headquarters (morning of Day Three).

Alongside Laura's story and intertwined with it is that of Rosa, the sister of Pietro, the comrade who was killed by Laura. Rosa is summoned to police headquarters (Day One) and has to identify her brother's body. The next day (Day Two), she goes to the station to return home to Irpinia for the funeral. In the evening, she arrives at the scene of the earthquake where her mother is waiting for her (television background: *Patatrac!*) and the following morning (Day Three), with her mother and one of her mother's friends, Pinuccio, she walks around the ruins of their town. At exactly the same time as Marta's suicide, the burial of Pietro takes place and another woman, the judge Giuliana (Mariangela Melato), is woken up by her daughter, Francesca. All the latter events take place at 7.38 a.m. on Saint Leopold's day.

This is a film, then, about mothers and daughters, about the effects on private life of the actions of those who have chosen violence and those who find themselves involved in it unexpectedly. The first maternal figure to appear, and perhaps the most intense, is the nanny Gina who waits, guardian of the home and childhood, in the large country retreat, symbol of bourgeois wealth.<sup>70</sup> And it is within the childhood home that Gina and Laura hear the announcement of the death of the judge in Venice – 'ancora un vile attentato terroristico' – and the nanny replies 'povero mondo, povera Italia, sembra di essere tornati in tempo di guerra perché ammazzeranno tanta gente, dimmelo tu che hai studiato, a che serve?'. Nonetheless, the nanny is visibly concerned and maternal towards Laura, more so than her real mother who instead treats her like a friend.

The link between Gina and Marta which is present throughout the story becomes tighter when the officer of the *carabinieri* tells Marta of the charges her daughter faces

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<sup>70</sup> There are similar interiors in *Caro papà* and Primo Spaggiari's villa in *La tragedia*. In *Colpire al cuore* the walls are filled with paintings and books and classical music plays in the background.



and she replies, incredulously; 'Ma le pare che, in tanti anni, io non mi sia resa conto di niente?'.<sup>71</sup> This in fact recalls something Laura herself had said to Gina: 'Ma tu sei proprio sicura d'avermi tirata su bene?...non sai niente, non sai chi sono, chi sono diventata, che cosa voglio, che cosa faccio'. Marta and Gina are forced to acknowledge the secret that Laura has hidden from them and the impossibility of making things right and of real communication and so they decide to 'go away'. Gina has the strength to repudiate Laura and goes away when she guesses her hidden secret, whereas her mother, in the grip of desperation, punishes herself first and foremost. Maria (Rosanna Podestà), Rosa's mother, also repudiates her stepson, Pietro, the only male figure in the film: 'Sentivo che non era uno come noi, figlio di una matta, e infatti guarda come è finito: morto ammazzato', demonstrating, in Buttafava's words, 'un cinismo, un'amoralità tragicamente suggerita dalla sopravvivenza'.<sup>72</sup> The only person who seems to support the dead Pietro is his sister Rosa, who clashes irreparably with their mother.

Renata's attempted suicide (an 'old trick', Laura remarks, used by 'le mogli per riconquistare i mariti e i figli per riconquistare l'attenzione dei genitori') is the forerunner of the much more dramatic suicide of Marta, which is seen through the eyes of Renata's daughter, Francesca. Giuliana, the woman judge, who appears in the final sequences, lives the contradiction which the attempt to combine two different roles often brings. On the one hand she reproaches her young daughter for telling on her father, whom she has seen in the car with another woman: 'Vedi cosa hai combinato? Hai tradito papà e hai dato un dolore a me' (this echoes the mother's reaction in the treatment of *Colpire al cuore* when Emilio makes a similar revelation); on the other hand, she takes Laura's confession of the names of her accomplices. As Nuccio Lodato comments,

<sup>71</sup> De Franceschi, 'Segreti segreti di G. Bertolucci. Figurazioni dell'enigma', p. 288.

<sup>72</sup> Buttafava, 'Segreti segreti: l'antiarchitettura di G. Bertolucci', p. 101.

il dramma della donna giudice è quello di contraddire la donna madre. Poche ore prima nella sua veste privata la delazione era considerata un'infamia. Nella sua veste pubblica invece diventa una virtù.<sup>73</sup>

The presence of the maternal and feminine dimension is combined with the absence of a father figure. But whereas in *La tragedia di un uomo ridicolo*, *Caro papà* and *Colpire al cuore* the absence of a father able to convey shared values led to the degeneration of the father-son relationship, despite the father's intermittent attempts to retrieve it, in *Segreti segreti* the father's absence is a static, immutable element. Men are either remembered (Laura's father) or killed (the judge, Laura's comrade Pietro), they are absent husbands (Giuliana's and Renata's) or desired husbands (Marta's, Gina's, and Maria's), but they are never present and active.

Laura appears cold and determined to kill, but immediately after the crime she feels the need to take refuge in her family home, to make a journey of memory towards her roots, her past, the purity of childhood which, however, can no longer be recovered. And yet she seems strong, almost arrogantly self-confident, when she compares herself with Rosa whom she has followed in order to see if she might have identified her. Horizontal communication between two women of the same generation is also impossible here. As Leonardo De Franceschi notes, Laura and Rosa exchange quips based on 'dissimulazione' and 'affabulazione difensiva', which expose 'l'irrealizzabilità di uno scambio comunicativo profondo'.<sup>74</sup> Neither of the two is prepared to let the mask of pretence drop in the interests of mutual understanding. Laura's encounters with other

<sup>73</sup> Lodato, 'Segreti segreti di Giuseppe Bertolucci', p. 60.

<sup>74</sup> De Franceschi, 'Segreti segreti di G. Bertolucci. Figurazioni dell'enigma', p. 286.

women represent in dramatized form what Ida Farè and Franca Spirito claimed about women involved in the armed struggle, that ‘non capiscono le donne, sono estraniare dall’essere donna, attraverso la militanza’.<sup>75</sup> In the next chapter I shall concentrate directly on the question of women’s role in the armed struggle and representations of it.

At the end, Laura is arrested and dragged away by the *carabinieri* without putting up any resistance, like a dead weight, and interrogated at the *questura*.<sup>76</sup> Renata’s daughter, Francesca, watches as she is taken away. Lodato remarks that the eyes of this ‘daughter’ of the new generation, ‘ripuliti dalla visione di *Mamma Roma* di Pasolini, fisseranno l’epilogo della tragedia, oggettivandolo nella sua raccapricciante inesplicabilità’.<sup>77</sup> Here again there emerges the theme of the new generation, the children of those who have chosen the armed struggle. Francesca’s distressed gaze reminds us of Emilio’s. Does it conceal the same intentions?

De Franceschi suggests that ‘la confessione di Laura davanti alla giudice rivela l’insostenibilità umana di un percorso ideologico ed esistenziale, la necessità di una soluzione di continuità radicale’.<sup>78</sup> Laura is alone: she has chosen not to have children, she does not have a man, her mother is now dead, and by informing on her fellow activists she even renounces her own identity as a ‘comrade’, a ‘terrorist’. With her strong desire to dissociate herself from the past, she appears to be a victim of her own decisions, her own executioner.

I do not agree with Gianni Borgna’s description of *Segreti segreti* as ‘un film sulla follia: (...) follia quella di Laura che uccide senza un perché (...), follia il suo sguardo incredulo e quasi disperato, quando sua madre le confessa di volersi

<sup>75</sup> Ida Farè and Franca Spirito, *Mara e le altre. Le donne e la lotta armata: storie interviste riflessioni*, Milan: Feltrinelli, 1979, p. 88.

<sup>76</sup> Before she sees her mother lying dead on the road Laura sees her shoe. In *La tragedia di un uomo ridicolo* Primo Spaggiari also finds a shoe: that of his son at the scene of the supposed kidnapping.

<sup>77</sup> Lodato, ‘*Segreti segreti* di Giuseppe Bertolucci’, p. 60.

<sup>78</sup> De Franceschi, ‘*Segreti segreti* di G. Bertolucci. Figurazioni dell’enigma’, p. 292.

risposare'.<sup>79</sup> It seems to me instead a film about desperation and the devastating effects of political violence on the family life both of those who choose armed struggle and those who are involved indirectly as their mothers, friends or sisters. The former move within the labyrinth of pre-existing family ties, conscious or unconscious, solid or fragile. When they are fragile, however, the film does imply that this fragility is the cause of the terrorist's actions, or that it has 'una valenza in qualche modo giustificativa'.<sup>80</sup>

In this way, *Segreti segreti* moves us significantly away from those texts that focus on the relationship between father and son. The intergenerational relationships are fundamental, as in the other texts, but they are treated in a different way. Laura's mother and her former nanny, Gina, do not recognize or accept her choice of political violence and the effects on them all are very severe: the mother's suicide, Gina's departure, Laura's own informing on her colleagues. In this way, the film avoids the stereotypes of terrorism as a product of family conflicts and examines, instead, the effects of the terrorist's actions on her personal relationships.

### *Caro Michele*

*Caro Michele* by Natalia Ginzburg is an epistolary novel containing an exchange of letters between an only son who is far from home and various friends and members of his family. Published in 1973, it is one of the first novels to have referred to the armed groups of the left, even though the direct references are few. The text is interesting above all in the way its use of the epistolary form gives shape to the attempted dialogue between mother and son. Michele is for the most part a *narrated* character who 'reveals' himself only through his brief letters to his sister, Angelica, and his mother, Adriana.

<sup>79</sup> Gianni Borgna, 'Segreti segreti', *Filmcritica*, No. 354, April 1985, pp. 247-249.

<sup>80</sup> De Franceschi, 'Segreti segreti di G. Bertolucci. Figurazioni dell'enigma', p. 291.

In the 1976 film of the same title, directed by Mario Monicelli, Michele is far away and visually absent, almost as if to indicate the 'disappearance' of part of a generation into political violence. Whereas in the novel the characters are presented through their feelings and the perspective displayed is essentially inner and subjective, the film eschews this aspect and devotes excessive space instead to the story of Mara, Michele's girlfriend, and her efforts to bring up her newborn son.

The portrayal of the family ties and of the effects that distance has on the relationship with the 'foolish' son are central to the story. Michele's parents had separated when he was still young and he had lived with his father who, according to his mother, considers him 'La sua stella (...). (...) l'unica cosa al mondo che sia degna di tenerezza e di venerazione'.<sup>81</sup> However, when the father dies, shortly after Michele leaves, the latter not only decides not to come back for the funeral but also refuses the inheritance he has been left – a house, a tower and some of his father's paintings – and thus repudiates the bond with his father and his bourgeois family, as Marco had done in *Caro papà*.<sup>82</sup> His mother, 'sovente depressa', lives in memories of previous times and awaits Michele's return. Between the two there is no ideological or intergenerational clash because, although she is vaguely aware of her son's links with a political group, she does not believe him capable of anything bad. On the contrary, she considers him a 'victim' of the family situation in which he has grown up: 'Io non ti ho educato. Non c'ero, come facevo a educarti. (...) Tuo padre certo non ti educava essendosi cacciato in testa che tu eri nato educatissimo. Così a te non ti ha educato nessuno'.<sup>83</sup> She is pleased

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<sup>81</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 5.

<sup>82</sup> Michele's mother wonders: 'non riesco a immaginare niente che possa impedire a una persona di ritornare quando c'è una disgrazia (...). Mi domando se verrai quando io morirò' (*ibid.*, p. 39). She remains tragically unaware that it will be her who will attend her son's funeral.

<sup>83</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 42.

to hear Michele is going to get married because she sees a chance for him to fill his emotional gaps:

Il fatto che questa donna che tu sposi abbia trent'anni, non mi sembra un fatto negativo. Tu evidentemente hai bisogno di aver vicino una donna più vecchia di te. Hai bisogno di affetto materno. Questo perché quando eri piccolo, tuo padre ti ha tolto da me.<sup>84</sup>

The narrative, therefore, foregrounds reflections on the nature of personal relationships, characterized by a general crisis in family values. The marriage of Michele's sister, Angelica, is under strain – 'pensò che non amava più Oreste. (...) Anche lui non l'amava più' – and she has unhappy memories of the time shortly before her own parents separated:

Io non sapevo chi di loro due aveva torto o ragione. Non me lo chiedevo nemmeno. Sapevo solo che dalla stanza dove loro stavano venivano delle onde di angoscia che si propagavano per tutta la casa. Non un angolo della casa rimaneva salvo. L'angoscia era dappertutto.<sup>85</sup>

Ada and Osvaldo, Michele's friend, are also separated and Michele himself seems dubious and uncertain about his new relationship:

Con Eileen non posso parlare (...) non ama stare a sentire le persone che parlano. Eileen è molto intelligente, ma ho scoperto che tutta la sua intelligenza non mi serve a nulla, perché è indirizzata verso cose che non mi riguardano affatto come la fisica nucleare. In fondo preferirei una moglie stupida, che mi ascoltasse con pazienza e stupidamente.<sup>86</sup>

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<sup>84</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 94.

<sup>85</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 81, 60.

<sup>86</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 117.

At the same time, Michele confesses to sometimes being nostalgic for ‘quelli che uso chiamare “i miei”, anche se non siete per niente miei, come io non sono per niente vostro’.<sup>87</sup>

In this atmosphere of disintegration there is no place for children. Mara, despite having decided against an abortion during her pregnancy, considers her child nothing but trouble and describes him as ‘tremendo’. Michele does not like small children. Adriana says ‘la prospettiva di avere bambini in casa mi affatica al solo pensarci’ and she wonders: ‘Dio mio come mai nascono sempre tutti questi bambini quando la gente è stufa e non li sopporta più. Se ne sono visti troppi’.<sup>88</sup>

The references to political violence itself are, as I have noted, minimal – Michele’s mention of a sub-machine gun hidden in the wood-burning stove of his apartment, his fear of being arrested, his escape to London, his mother’s fear that he has joined those ‘gruppuscoli politici pericolosi’ or tupamaros.<sup>89</sup> Likewise, little space is given in the text to Michele’s subsequent disaffection with politics (despite the fact that he will die in Bruges during a demonstration):

Io continuo a non essere comunista, continuo a non essere niente, e ho perso i contatti con queglii amici che avevo a Roma e non so più niente di loro. Pensare che sono partito anche per ragioni politiche (...). Comunque ora non mi occupo di politica, se ne occupa mia moglie e questo mi basta.<sup>90</sup>

At the centre of the novel, therefore, is chiefly the disintegration of the family and the behaviour of young people, and the figure of the absent son alludes metonymically to the wider situation of family break-up. A similar atmosphere of

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<sup>87</sup> *Ibid.*, p.116.

<sup>88</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 94, 13.

<sup>89</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 25.

<sup>90</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 100.

family disintegration is also present in Monicelli's screen version, where it is however conveyed mainly through the absence of Michele. The references in the film to Michele's political choices are, apart from a shot of a sub-machine gun, a shot of his basement apartment looking like a hideout with his comrades sleeping on the floor and copies of *il manifesto* lying around and a few ambiguous remarks by his friend Osvaldo suggesting that Michele is involved in violent activities.

To sum up, one can say that the novel focuses on a central relationship, that of Adriana and her son Michele, mediated and filtered through an exchange of letters which mark out the physical and emotional separation between mother and son, while Michele's choice of illegal political activity is deliberately left obscure. Once again, we have a reconstruction of the social and psychological climate which might surround and possibly motivate the choice of political violence – the broken family, the son who harbours anger towards his father and feels emotionally distant from his mother – and, more generally, the difference in values and expectations between generations. But, whereas the texts centreing on the father-son relationship tended to concentrate on rebellion within the family structure, here a society is represented in which family ties are undergoing transformation, the children have a greater desire for independence and the mothers have to resign themselves to their children's choices, even if they are the wrong ones. It should be noted that in Monicelli's film very little of this attention to the psychological and social fabric of Italy in the early 1970s remains.

It is worth mentioning briefly here the feature film *L'attesa* (1991) directed by Fabrizio Borelli, which presents a similar story to that narrated in *Caro Michele*. Borelli had first-hand political experience of semi-clandestine groups and the Roman collectives and his film deals with the effect within the family of the absence of the protagonist Paolo, who has been arrested as a result of his involvement in the armed



struggle. The director told me that he had not read Ginzburg's novel and that he decided to make 'un film su una violenza completamente subita dalla famiglia di Paolo'.<sup>91</sup> As the title indicates, the film concentrates on the period of waiting when Paolo is about to return home after having served his time in jail. The perspective is that of Irene (Clara Cresta), his younger sister, who awaits him with 'l'amore incondizionato di una madre' after years of an exchange of letters in which her brother has tried to explain his reasons. However, as in the other cases these reasons are not explored in depth but are left rather vague: 'Ho creduto che si potesse fare qualcosa, in nome di un mondo migliore, del migliore dei mondi'. Like Adriana with her son in *Caro Michele*, Irene awaits her brother's return expectantly, unlike her father who is afraid that it will ruin the equilibrium that he has tried to restore in the home since Paolo's departure. He has had rebuilding work done in their home and, as Borelli confirmed to me, this alludes to the attempt to move on without the son.

### ***La voce nel pozzo***

*La voce nel pozzo* is a short story by Nerino Rossi, published in 1990, which tells the story of Aristide, a former partisan and a friend of the 'President' (a transparent allusion to Moro, although the latter's name is never mentioned). The story opens with Aristide's return home to his village, after a long absence, to visit his elderly mother. The village is divided by a river into two 'different worlds', perhaps a reference to the internal divisions within Italy. The private and the collective planes are linked, first, by Aristide's memories of his experience in the Resistance and then by a request for help from an old friend who was also active in the Resistance, Giovanna, whose son Luca

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<sup>91</sup> The quotations from Fabrizio Borelli are from my interview with him in Rome on 29 August 2000.

has run away from home straight after finishing his degree and has become involved with an armed group in Milan.

It is clear from the start that *La voce nel pozzo* exemplifies not only the relationship between mother and son, like that of Michele and his mother in Ginzburg's novel, but also the conflictual relationship between father and son. Although Aristide is not Luca's biological father, only his mother's friend, he shares the main characteristics of the 'fathers' generation' which we saw in *Caro papà* and *La tragedia di un uomo ridicolo*. Once again there is a representation of parallels between two periods of struggle, the Resistance and the *anni di piombo*, but this time the mother, Giovanna, too has a past as a partisan:

figlia di un padrone, (...) era stata un vero e proprio scandalo storico (...) si era mescolata al suo gruppo di figli di contadini e di apprendisti artigiani con una straordinaria disinvoltura diventandone ben presto la trascinatrice.<sup>92</sup>

Aristide, as an ex-partisan, remembers the Resistance through two problematic episodes which occurred after the end of the war and which affected him profoundly: the killing of a young German and the abduction of a young Fascist with the intention of killing him. The Fascist was in fact spared thanks to the intervention of Aristide's father who 'prevented' the execution. Although Aristide realizes that 'non c'è generazione che si salvi (...) prima o poi le tocca in sorte di conoscere un nemico', he wants to try, as his father had done for him (and Luca is the right age to be his son, even though he is not), to take the weapons out of Luca's hands and 'save' him.<sup>93</sup> Aristide thinks to himself:

<sup>92</sup> Nerino Rossi, *La voce nel pozzo*, Venice: Marsilio, 1990, p. 16.

<sup>93</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 34.

non è per generosità che ti sto aiutando a non sbagliare, ma per le mie debolezze e le mie colpe, di oggi e di ieri. Sì, anche una colpa che ho addosso da quando avevo la tua età. E quello che si fa alla tua età resta, eccome resta. Tu questo ancora non lo sai;<sup>94</sup>

Giovanna is a mother who actively wants her son back and hopes that Aristide, who has become a powerful man with many acquaintances, can help her, 'decisa a tentare ogni via, compresa quella del potere, per arrivare in tempo'.<sup>95</sup>

The mother in this novel is similar only in part to the mother in *Caro Michele*. Adriana in Ginzburg's novel waits passively and chooses not to know about the life her son is leading. Giovanna also waits in the first part of the story for her son to come back, but then she decides to act even without Aristide's help. The relationship between mother and son is once again, in contrast to that between father and son, characterized not by conflict but by a communication which, however painful, is not based on competitive anger. Luca speaks openly to his mother about his 'choice' and she wants to make him change his mind through confrontation and discussion.

Parallel to the concerns and dialogue between Giovanna and Luca are those between Aristide and his mother who worries that he could become a target for terrorist attacks:

Scappi quando sei lontano; ma scappi anche dopo che sei tornato. Dappertutto questo è il tuo destino, ormai. Ma adesso tua madre ti ordina di dire la verità. Ti sono saltati addosso? Sei caduto in una trappola? Hanno sparato? Ormai vi sparano, vi sparano tutti i giorni.<sup>96</sup>

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<sup>94</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 58.

<sup>95</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 25.

<sup>96</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 64.

The anxieties of the mother of a young terrorist are contrasted with those of the mother of a potential victim of terrorism, who recognizes that

sono sempre le madri che ci vanno di mezzo. Oggi è una madre vecchia che si preoccupa, domani toccherà a una madre giovane. Perché fra madre e madre la differenza non è poi così grande: il dolore una madre lo ha se hanno sparato a suo figlio, ma anche se suo figlio ha sparato.<sup>97</sup>

Aristide arrives in Milan – ‘Una città ormai in fiamme. Dove un ragazzo di vent’anni può bruciarsi ogni giorno’ – hoping that ‘non gli [Luca] abbiano ancora consegnato il piombo, come si faceva noi coi partigiani appena arrivati’.<sup>98</sup> The boy is at police headquarters for questioning. Once he has been released, Aristide manages to contact him. He wants to convince him to go home but Luca does not hide his intentions: ‘Non sono ancora quello che lei teme, professore, però lo sarò presto’.<sup>99</sup> Here too again intergenerational conflict erupts and communication between the two is impossible. Aristide speaks to Luca ‘like a father’ while Luca addresses him as ‘lei’ and ‘professore’ to emphasise the distance he wants to keep from someone who represents the values of the world he has decided to oppose. Luca accuses the ruling class of which Aristide is a part:

Si può ben fare la rivoluzione contro una classe dominante giuliva, gioconda, sempre allegra, sempre contenta, che eternamente ride. Lei lo sa che il riso è una forma di arroganza, la peggiore arroganza?  
(...)

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<sup>97</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 65.

<sup>98</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 23, 42.

<sup>99</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 45.

Li conosciamo bene i vostri sarcasmi. Non avevo certo sperato che dalla sua bocca uscissero parole serie. So dei milioni di parole inutili di cui siete capaci, ma che lei fosse venuto per provocarmi, questo non potevo immaginarlo.<sup>100</sup>

The ideological and generational clash reminds us, above all, of that between father and son in *Caro papà*. Aristide manages to get Luca back to his mother's house by stealth. Instead of driving him to the station in Milan, as they had agreed, he takes him all the way to Bologna, effectively making him prisoner in his car.

From the eighth chapter onwards, intertwined with this more private and personal dimension is a narrative of bloody political acts which seem to be based on those of 1974-80: the shooting of two judges, the abduction of the President, a bomb in Bologna. Luca has left home again to go to Bologna and when the news of the bomb there breaks both Aristide and Giovanna seem to think Luca could have something to do with the massacre, for which the 'brigatisti' are believed responsible:

è stato un attentato con le bombe (...). Si sa che per attentati del genere adoperano le nuove leve, per provarli (...). So che c'è un ferito. Che un brigatista è rimasto ferito, perché dalla caserma hanno risposto col fuoco.<sup>101</sup>

Soon after, Aristide is contacted by Luca's comrades because he has been injured and needs a doctor. Aristide manages to find a doctor friend willing to help. In the meantime, news reaches him of another attack: 'il ferimento alle gambe, in città diverse, di due giudici. Entrambi erano impegnati in processi ad appartenenti alle brigate rosse.'<sup>102</sup> Giovanna, worried and determined not to give up, has been contacted by the armed group and decides to try and save her son, alone if necessary, by offering money

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<sup>100</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 50, 47.

<sup>101</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 77.

<sup>102</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 134.

to the group in exchange for his 'freedom', as if he were a hostage. But, on the same day they have agreed the exchange in Bologna the news of the President's abduction is announced and the mother realizes that the broken appointment and the abduction are connected. She sees that her son is completely implicated in it, at least ideologically, but concludes that 'nessuno poteva toglierle la gioia di essere una madre come tutte'.<sup>103</sup> Her reactions, those of the public and those of the media are all narrated on the same page:

L'ingresso del caffè era tutto ingombro. Quelli che stavano in ultima fila erano sulle punte dei piedi. Il volume di voce del televisore era altissimo. Adesso qualche faccia già si voltava, come per avvertire gli ultimi arrivati che era una notizia da stordire.

Giovanna sentì lo speaker pronunciare le parole 'brigate rosse'. Dovette appoggiarsi a qualcuno. Poi si riprese. E, lasciandosi stritolare dalla gente, avanzò ancora nella sala.

L'uomo più vicino al televisore si girò e, come rivolgendosi a tutti, spalancò le braccia. Era stata una carneficina. (...) E lui, il presidente, l'avevano rapito; forse era anche ferito.

Giovanna chinò la testa, rimanendo a lungo così. Mormorò il nome di Luca. Lei, dunque, era la madre di un brigatista. No, gridò a se stessa, non c'è una madre diversa dall'altra.<sup>104</sup>

Aristide, who had spoken about the President as if he were a 'special' friend, joins Giovanna after the news of the abduction and, together, they reach the conclusion that 'la disgrazia del presidente sia diventata anche la disgrazia di Luca'.<sup>105</sup> Then Aristide decides to return to Rome to resign permanently from his never specified position as 'uomo di potere'. 'Che cosa accadrà al presidente?', 'Su Luca nessuna novità'. With these despondent words the novel ends.<sup>106</sup>

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<sup>103</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 165.

<sup>104</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 164, 165.

<sup>105</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 107, 167.

<sup>106</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 197.

Although the identity of the President is not made explicit, the reference to Moro is clear, not least because they mention Via Fani. At this point, although perhaps one should not expect there to be a direct fit between historical and literary facts, one cannot help noticing the inconsistencies in this text and wonder how Luca can be involved both in an action of left political violence and in the massacre in Bologna, the worst and bloodiest expression of the violence of the right. This lack of clarity, which never acknowledges the possibility of fascist responsibility for any political violence – ‘è stato un attentato con le bombe (...). Si sa che per attentati del genere adoperano le nuove leve, per provarli (...). So che c’è un ferito. Che un brigatista è rimasto ferito, perché dalla caserma hanno risposto col fuoco’<sup>107</sup> – might be seen as a symptomatic omission or a deliberate act of censorship by the author – a former Christian Democrat politician – on the subject of right political violence and the responsibility for it amongst certain elements of the state presided over by the DC.

## 2.4 Conclusion

At the start of this chapter I suggested two possible reasons – *repression of politics* or *personalization of politics* – why representations of political violence so frequently centre on intergenerational family relationships. At the end we may now say that, although the two may seem to be opposites, they may also converge. It is possible, in other words, to repress one level of political reality – the public sphere and explicitly stated ideological motives – in order better to explore another: that of personal politics, the deep and intimate reasons behind certain public actions and ideological choices. Some of the texts I have looked at in this chapter exemplify this convergence. In *Caro*

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<sup>107</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 77.

*papà*, *La tragedia di un uomo ridicolo*, *Colpire al cuore* and *Segreti segreti*, the ‘big politics’ of state and parties are relegated to the margins of the story, or become a sort of background, in order to give priority to the ‘little politics’ of personal relationships, intergenerational conflict and the grief resulting from the choices of son or daughter who dominates the main action. The attention devoted to family themes by the writers and directors may be explained, in turn, by the major changes in family structure occurring in the postwar years – nuclearization, more frequent separations, children leaving home –, changes which began to make themselves deeply felt precisely in the 1970s.

At the same time the possible convergence of the two explanations, repression and personalization, does not completely solve the problem. In almost all the texts the reduction of the sphere of ‘big politics’ to allow the enlargement of ‘little politics’ leaves out many important elements which in reality were characteristic of left political militancy in the 1970s and the choice of armed struggle. Even in as politically intelligent a text as *Colpire al cuore* the precise nature of the father’s political activity and his relationship with the armed cells is left quite obscure.

To sum up, we can say that the choice of the perspective of intergenerational relationships in many texts dealing with the *anni di piombo* has important implications and consequences. It gives prominence, sometimes with acute psychological sensitivity (as, for example, in *Caro Michele*), to the familial and personal reasons behind certain political choices, or (as in *Segreti segreti*) to their effect on the family and on intimate relationships. At the same time it often tends to suggest, simplifying a complex situation, that these political choices are ultimately *reducible* to these causes – that the latter constitute a kind of code with which one can decipher terrorism. In the next chapter, through an analysis of the portrayal of women terrorists, we will have the



opportunity to explore further the discussion of this theme of the reduction of the political to the private and of the use of family motifs as an interpretative key to political action.

## Chapter Three

### Gender and political violence: transgressions, normalizations and crises

Voi donne, avete la missione di salvare il focolare, l'amore delle fonti di vita, il senso delle culle. Voi siete presenti al mistero della vita che comincia. Voi siete le consolatrici al momento della morte.

La nostra tecnica rischia di diventare inumana. Riconciliate gli uomini con la vita. E soprattutto vegliate, ve ne supplichiamo, sull'avvenire della nostra specie.

(Concilio Ecumenico Vaticano II, *Messaggi del Concilio all'umanità*, 'Alle donne', 8 December 1965, Bologna: Edizioni Dehoniane, 1970, p. 307).

#### 3.1 Introduction

Monday, 2 March 2003.

On the 10 a.m. train from Rome to Florence, two police officers are making a spot check of documents. A man and a woman show false papers. They feel trapped, draw guns and shoot at the two officers. In the exchange of fire, one of them, Emanuele Petri, is killed as well as the man, Mario Galesi.

A passenger who was travelling in the same carriage described the woman as

fredda, impassibile (...). Una statua. Una sfinge. Aveva occhi di ghiaccio e in quella situazione terribile ha mantenuto una freddezza che ci ha sconvolto. La prima impressione che ci ha fatto è che fosse una donna depressa. Soprappeso, i capelli lunghi e poco curati. Una che non si tiene in forma per nulla, insomma. Dimostrava una cinquantina d'anni. Poi, vedendo come ha reagito in quei momenti pazzeschi, abbiamo capito che non era una depressa, ma un'esaltata,

una fanatica. Una che avrebbe potuto farci fuori tutti e poi andarsene al bar e ordinare un cappuccino come se non fosse successo niente.<sup>1</sup>

The report the next day in *Il Corriere della Sera* included a testimony of the policeman who, together with the other officer, had disarmed her:

Forse bisognerebbe cominciare dagli occhi di lei, della terrorista. (...). Quella donna ha occhi cattivi. Anzi no. Di più. Quelli sono gli occhi di una belva. Ecco, cominciamo da quegli occhi (...). Io, adesso, non lo so descrivere uno sguardo feroce, da animale catturato, da preda che non può scappare. Ma è stato lì, quando ormai l'avevamo immobilizzata (...), che ho avuto veramente paura. Quando lei mi fissava, con quegli occhi. Mi guardava, in silenzio, con quegli occhi.<sup>2</sup>

Both these comments, as well as the title given by Carlo Bonini to his article in *La Repubblica* – ‘Era bella, poi ha preso la pistola’ – show more or less consciously the breakdown of the Greek ideal of *kalokagathia* (fusion of beauty and goodness) and express the contrast between femininity/beauty and violence. They are reminiscent of Lombroso's view of criminal women as possessing characteristics that are more masculine than feminine. Discussing their faces in the chapter *Fotografie di criminali e prostitute* in his book on the female criminal he comments:

Molti diranno che infine queste facce non hanno nulla di orribile, ed io ne convengo in parte, perché a pari condizione coi maschi criminali (...), le femmine sono infinitamente meno brutte; in alcune perfino vi ha un raggio di bellezza (...); ma quando esiste, essa è assai più virile che femminile; per ben cogliere questo carattere, se ne guardi il profilo in basso nel N. 20 bis, 6 e 6 bis, e allora anche il più profano vedrà quanto vi è di duro, di crudele e di maschio, in queste linee, che pure non sono prive di grazia.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Franca Selvatici, ‘Una pistola puntata alla gola poi le urla e un lago di sangue’, *la Repubblica*, 3 March 2003, p. 3.

<sup>2</sup> Fa. Ro. ‘L’ho disarmata, non dimenticherò mai il suo sguardo feroce’, *Corriere della Sera*, 3 March 2003, p. 2.

<sup>3</sup> Cesare Lombroso, *La donna delinquente, la prostituta, la donna normale*, Turin: Roux, 1893, p. 341.

Freud too saw in the aggression of women a certain 'maleness', which women desired in order to overcome their state of inferiority.<sup>4</sup> Interestingly, those apparently spontaneous testimonies of the passenger and the policeman, presumably without their being aware of it, show elements of a shared historical stock of representations of the politically radical woman as a wild animal ('belva', 'animale catturato'), or as an uncanny or frightening mythical creature ('sfinge'). This stock includes, among other examples, Edmund Burke's description of the crowd that marched on Versailles on 6 October 1789 – 'all the unutterable abominations of the furies of hell, in the abused shape of the vilest of women'<sup>5</sup> – and various images of the 'Red she-devil' in anti-communist propaganda. In E.F. Berendt's *Soldiers of Freedom: A National-Socialist Primer* of 1935 one reads:

The rifle-women were the sort of cruel furies only Bolshevism could devise. While the heart of one of the men of the Red Guard might be moved to pity at the sight of suffering innocents, those women were bestialized and devoid of human feeling.<sup>6</sup>

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More recently, Daniel E. Georges-Abeyie, putting forward four propositions towards a definition of women as terrorists, has written, in a passage reminiscent of Lombroso, that 'women who lack the characteristics and traits that society considers appropriate – gentleness, passivity, non-violent personalities, seductiveness, physically attractive faces and figures – may seek success in some non-feminine realm, by displaying aggression, unadorned faces and bodies, toughness, or other masculine qualities'. He adds that, since masculine and feminine characteristics are historically variable cultural constructions, the female terrorists 'of the future can be expected to exhibit fewer of the characteristic usually defined as masculine, because clear divisions between sex-linked roles no longer will exist'. Daniel E. Georges-Abeyie, 'Women as Terrorists', in Lawrence Zelic Freedaman and Yonah Alexander (eds), *Perspectives on Terrorism*, Wilmington: DE: Scholarly Resources, 1983, p. 82.

<sup>4</sup> Sigmund Freud, 'The dissolution of the Oedipus complex', in *Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud*, ed. James Strachey, Volume 19, London: Hogarth Press, 1924, p. 178.

<sup>5</sup> Edmund Burke, *Reflections on the Revolution in France* (1790), ed. Conor Cruise O'Brien, Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1969, p. 165.

<sup>6</sup> E. F. Berendt, *Soldaten der Freiheit: Ein Parolebuch des Nationalsozialismus 1918/25*, Berlin, 1935, p. 89, quoted in Klaus Theweleit, *Male Fantasies*, Volume I, *Women, floods, bodies, history*, translated by Stephen Conway in collaboration with Erica Carter and Chris Turner, Cambridge: Polity, 1987, p. 76 (original edition *Männerphantasien*, I, *Frauen, Fluten, Körper, Geschichte*, Frankfurt a. M: Verlag Roter Stern, 1977).

The newspapers preferred to call the woman, Nadia Lioce – who, with Mario Galesi, was a member of the so-called Nuove Brigate Rosse – by her second name, Desdemona, which seemed more striking and exotic (Fig. 9). They reported the statements of relatives and friends who described the kind little girl who used to bring home mongrel puppies ('cuccioli bastardini'), the dedicated student with a solid working-class family behind her. Even the comments referring to the political dimension of her life – 'cominciò a frequentare il collettivo della città vecchia, [where] la portò uno dei suoi primi filarini', 'fu il femminismo il suo battesimo con la politica; ci crescevano i peli sulle gambe e lei insisteva che non uno andava strappato' – did not get beyond commonplaces and eschewed any serious inquiry into the reasons behind her conscious political choices.<sup>7</sup>



Fig. 9. Marco Imarisio, 'Ideologia e Rapine per i due br clandestini', *Corriere della Sera*, 3 March 2000

<sup>7</sup> Carlo Bonini, 'Nadia, Dal liceo alla clandestinità. "Era bella, poi ha preso la pistola"', *la Repubblica*, 4 March 2003, p. 4.

The descriptions of Nadia Lioce, then, belong to a particular set of clichés used in the construction of media events and in the creation of a public discourse on political violence: the concentration on physical appearance, with standard attributes like the pitiless gaze, and on the subject's personal biography, with the trivialization of their political history and motives. Anna Teresa Iaccheo, in an analysis of articles dealing with women and terrorism published in seven selected magazines from the late 1970s to 1982, noted this persistent attention to private life in the search for the causes of women's participation in political violence, as well as the clichés about physical appearance. Donatella Barus has made similar observations in her more recent comparison of the headlines of four daily newspapers (*La Stampa*, *L'Unità*, *la Repubblica*, *il manifesto*), from 1969 to 1989, in which she examines how women terrorists are presented to the reader.<sup>8</sup> Both studies mention another stereotype of the female terrorist apart from that of the dowdy woman, namely the beautiful and dangerous woman: 'Sulle caratteristiche fisiche di queste donne i mass-media costruiscono una vasta iconografia: da una parte quelle attraenti, dall'altra quelle poco interessanti'.<sup>9</sup>

The most visible example of the 'attractive' type was without doubt Margherita Cagol, the best-known female member of the Red Brigades and wife of Renato Curcio, whom she freed from Casale Monferrato prison on 18 February 1975.<sup>10</sup> And yet this type too tended to be 'masculinized'. Farè and Spirito in *Mara e le altre* claimed that

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<sup>8</sup> Anna Teresa Iaccheo, *Donne armate. Resistenza e terrorismo: testimoni dalla Storia*, Milan: Mursia, 1994, pp. 87, 89: 'con diversa enfasi i periodici esaminati esaltano l'aspetto fisico, durante la militanza e in carcere, che può risultare scialbo e insignificante, dolce e tranquillo, aggressivo e provocante e, parallelamente le caratteristiche dell'abbigliamento (...). (...) soprattutto gli occhi ("aggressivi", "di ghiaccio", "da cinese") specchio, secondo una ben nota iconografia tradizionale, della vita interiore. Donatella Barus, 'Venere a mano armata. Donne e violenza politica nella stampa italiana', in *Zapruder*, No. 5, September-December 2004, pp. 31-45.

<sup>9</sup> Iaccheo, *Donne armate*, p. 89.

<sup>10</sup> Piero Agostini, *Mara Cagol. Una donna nelle prime Brigate Rosse*, Venice-Trento: Marsilio-Temi, 1980.

the women in the armed struggle who acquired most credibility were those who, like Cagol, followed models of behaviour that were substantially masculine: 'Le donne della lotta armata non capiscono le donne, sono estraniare dall'essere donna, attraverso la militanza'.<sup>11</sup> This seems to be echoed in Alberto Franceschini's remark: 'Solo Mara non cucinava, diceva di non esserne capace (...). Ma quando prendemmo le armi fu Mara a spiegare a Renato le prime regole da clandestini, a inventare modi ingegnosi per risolvere i problemi che incontravamo'.<sup>12</sup>

The descriptions of Cagol's charisma and professionalism while she was alive were echoed in the representations of her as young 'martire della rivoluzione' when she was killed. This emerges clearly in the BR communiqué announcing her death, on 5 June 1975, in an ambush by carabinieri after she and others had abducted Vittorio Gancia, of the *spumante*-producing family, and were found in a farmhouse near Aquilone Terme:

È caduta combattendo Margherita Cagol, Mara, dirigente comunista e membro del comitato esecutivo delle Br. La sua vita e la sua morte sono un esempio che nessun combattente per la libertà potrà più dimenticare. (...) Comandante politico-militare di colonna, Mara ha saputo guidare vittoriosamente alcune tra le più importanti operazioni dell'organizzazione (...). Che mille braccia si protendano a raccogliere il suo fucile. Noi, come ultimo saluto, le diciamo, Mara un fiore è sbocciato e questo fiore di libertà le Brigate Rosse continueranno a coltivarlo fino alla vittoria.<sup>13</sup>

In this feminized image the flower recalls the Resistance *topos* of the flower growing above the body of the fallen. A famous example is in the song 'Bella ciao': 'seppellire

<sup>11</sup> Ida Farè and Franca Spirito, *Mara e le altre. Le donne e la lotta armata: storie interviste riflessioni* (Milan: Feltrinelli, 1979), p. 88.

<sup>12</sup> Alberto Franceschini, *Mara, Renato e io. Storia dei fondatori delle Br*, (Milan: Mondadori, 1988), pp. 18.

<sup>13</sup> Giovanni Bianconi, *Mi dichiaro prigioniero politico. Storia delle Brigate rosse*, (Turin: Einaudi, 2003), p. 49.

lassù in montagna | sotto l'ombra d'un bel fior. (...) è il fiore del partigiano | morto per la libertà'.<sup>14</sup>

Between Mara and Nadia Desdemona many other women took part in the armed struggle in Italy and fed the collective imaginary, of which we shall see various examples in the texts examined in this chapter.

January 2001, Torch Gallery, Amsterdam.

The artist Antonio Riello exhibits his *Ladies weapons (sic)*: automatic rifles, hand-guns and grenades 'in women's clothes'. Riello accurately anticipated the surprise and fear his works would elicit, reactions which derived above all from the fact that weapons, which are culturally considered masculine objects and phallic symbols, were here 'feminized', 'made over' by his painting them in bright colours, adding glitter and other adornments, such as love hearts, added, and being given women's names (Figs 10 and 11). As Paola Di Cori has pointed out in another context, the combination of weapons and women is not culturally accepted because it imposes 'dei limiti all'uso esclusivo delle armi da parte degli uomini stessi' and threatens to undermine 'la compattezza di una certa idea di mascolinità che ruota attorno alla forza fisica e al guerreggiare come elementi predominanti di differenziazione sessuale'.<sup>15</sup> Riello's works, then, are provocative objects, 'paradoxical' and shocking precisely because they visually exacerbate the cultural clash between masculine and feminine to the point of creating an absolute split between them. Jonathan Turner, in his introduction to the catalogue of

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<sup>14</sup> Roberto Leydi traced the origins of this partisan version of the song to an older ballad with the same *topos*, 'Fior di tomba'. See 'La canzone popolare', in Ruggero Romano and Corrado Vivanti (eds), *Storia d'Italia*. vol. 5, *I documenti*, t. 2, Turin: Einaudi, 1973, pp. 1183-97.

<sup>15</sup> Paola Di Cori, 'Partigiane, repubblicane, terroriste', in Gabriele Ranzato (ed.), *Guerre fratricide. Le guerre civili in età contemporanea*, Turin: Bollati Boringhieri, 1994, p. 316.



Riello's exhibition, seems to miss this point when he uses the very gender binaries that the artist had sought to challenge:

He [Riello] takes the essentially cold and macho lines of weapons, and then gives them feminine curves. Fake fur, snakeskin and denim add tactile softness. Sequinned stretch fabric is wrapped around some parts and then padded for extra comfort. For lustre and opulence, diamonds and pearls are embedded in the gun barrels. Riello has created a murderous range of functional accessories. (...) To further override the inherent maleness of these weapons, Riello gives them girls' names referring back to their area of manufacture. They sound more like the names of au pairs or drag queens.<sup>16</sup>

Fig. 10. LUCY, 2001, US-hand grenade Mk2, in Antonio Riello, *Ladies Weapons*, Milan: Marinotti, 2001, p. 13.

Fig. 11. INGRID, 2000, German pistol, Luger P08, cal 9mmP, in Antonio Riello, *Ladies Weapons*, Milan: Marinotti, 2001, p. 22.

<sup>16</sup> Jonathan Turner, 'Antonio Riello', in Antonio Riello, *Ladies Weapons*, Milan: Marinotti, 2001, p. 8. Riello's use of oxymoronic objects (or at any rate objects perceived as such) recalls the paradoxical sculptures of Meret Oppenheim (e.g. 'Fur Teacup', 1936) and Claes Oldenberg (e.g. 'Floor Burger', 1962). Similarly disturbing, although for different reasons, is the series of fifteen paintings of members of the Rote Armee Fraktion by Gerhard Richter collectively entitled *October 18, 1977*. They depict Andreas Baader and Gudrun Ensslin, who were found dead in their cells in Stammheim prison, near Stuttgart, on 18 October 1977, as well as Holger Meins, who died in prison during a hunger strike in 1974, and Ulrike Meinhof, who was found hanged in her cell in 1976. The grey oil paintings seem like out-of-focus photographs. For Robert Storr, in the catalogue of the exhibition of Richter's pictures in New York in 2000, 'they in large part depended for their meaning on the horrid fascination, anxiety, ambivalence, and denial experienced by the nation that had lived through them, and by a generation worldwide for whom Baader, Meinhof, Meins, Ensslin, and the others were emblematic of the reckless idealism and bitter failure of youthful revolt in the Cold War era'. Robert Storr, *Gerhard Richter, October 18, 1977*, New York: Museum of Modern Art, 2000, p. 28.

The descriptions of Nadia Lioce and of Riello's weapons introduce the principal reflections that underlie this chapter. What are the underlying codes and cultural norms in texts depicting women who have chosen armed conflict? What are the implicit concepts of masculine and feminine in these texts and their implied assumptions about 'normal' women? How are women *constructed* in the texts with respect to these codes and norms? Here I follow Griselda Pollock's critique of the approach in cultural analysis which seeks to compare 'images of women' to 'real' women, on the grounds that one can have no direct knowledge of 'real' women, no access to them, outside the system of discourse, the signifying chain. Pollock proposed to replace the expression 'images of women'

by the notion of woman as a *signifier* in an ideological discourse in which one can identify the meanings that are attached to woman in different images and how the meanings are *constructed in relation to other signifiers* in that discourse.<sup>17</sup>

In the works I examine in the next part of the chapter (3.2) the woman terrorist is presented as someone who contravenes two of the main collective norms through which the specificity of 'woman' is imagined and constructed, both in Italy and in other western cultures: woman as maternal and woman as peace-loving. In Carlo Castellaneta's novel, *Ombre* (1982), Marco Tullio Giordana's film *La meglio gioventù* (2003) and the film *L'appuntamento* (2001) by Veronica Bilbao La Vieja, the women who choose to engage in armed struggle are characterized, first of all, by the devastating effects that the refusal to be mothers has on them. In a later moment, the woman

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<sup>17</sup> Griselda Pollock, 'What's Wrong with "Images of Women"?', in Rozika Parker and Griselda Pollock, *Framing Feminism: Art and the Women's Movement 1970-1985*, London: Harper Collins, 1987, p. 133 (my italics).

terrorist's realization of the 'mistake' she has made leads her in the two films to try and reacquire those norms she had previously repudiated and, by doing so, to have the chance to start again, while the protagonist of the novel accepts prison as a liberation.

In the works I look at in the subsequent part (3.3) – the novel *Voi grandi* by Lidia Ravera (1990), the short story 'Lettera non chiusa' by Erri De Luca (1997), and the novel *La guerra di Nora* by Antonella Tavassi la Greca (2003) – the woman terrorist is presented after her arrest or her escape. These texts contain two peculiar characteristics. The first is that they show unyielding, uncompromising women, who are not sorry for what they have done, who live in the past and are incapable of making a new life. The second is that these women are contrasted in all three works with two other characters: a man with whom they have shared the armed struggle in the past, and another woman who represents their *good double*. In analysing these works I shall concentrate particularly on this figure of the double who plays a particularly important part in their historical 'reassessment' of women's participation in the armed struggle.

In both these main parts of the chapter I shall quote extracts from Luce D'Eramo's short story 'Tra i pensieri di una terrorista rossa' (1990) in which the narrative voice takes the form of a letter addressed to 'members of the jury'. With cynical sarcasm it criticizes and dissects the theories most widely employed by the media and by criminologists to explain women's choice to engage in armed struggle and in this way it provides a compact overview of the most popular ones. This is the only text of the ones I have examined that tries to assert a real political dimension in women's choice of political violence, even if it does so in a slightly didactic way.<sup>18</sup> I

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<sup>18</sup> There are various other texts whose protagonists are women terrorists. The motif of the terrorist sister is present also in Francesca Marciano's *Casa Rossa* (originally published in English, London: Jonathan Cape, 2002). An unrepentant terrorist, Isabella, is released on the basis of statements by her *pentito* comrade, Enrico: 'Isabella Strada strongly opposed our decision to execute Lo Capo. She didn't participate. (...) She said she couldn't live with the idea. Lo Capo was married to a woman she knew

have consequently inserted it as a sort of counter-voice to all the other texts, which cling to the private sphere and more or less openly propose moralistic and conservative interpretations. All of them, in fact, show how the women who have chosen the armed struggle come up against disappointment and failure. There is hope only for those who are willing to reacquire the norms they had rejected and embark on the journey to becoming a 'beautiful soul', to use the term Jean Bethke Elshtain borrows from Hegel to designate the shared cultural image of woman as peaceful, embodying positive values and rejecting violence, in opposition to the male 'just warrior'.<sup>19</sup>

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from childhood. In a sense he was like family to her. She cried the night before. She begged me to think it over. But it was too late.' (pp. 239, 240). In this case too a 'positive' description is given of the woman and after her release she is even sanctified: 'Her alleged innocence, her estrangement from the acts of her friends, was a new burden she had decided to bear. But to do it, she had to shut herself off even more. She stopped coming to the hearings: defiantly, she said it was because of a bad flu. She stopped eating, she lost weight. She chopped off her hair. She looked like a young boy. A saint. A Joan of Arc.' (p. 241). Gian Mario Villalta's *Tuo Figlio* (Milan: Mondadori, 2004) tells the story of Riccardo, whose mother abandoned him when he was little to become a terrorist. She has since died of cancer in prison. Rocco Carbone's *Libera i miei nemici* (Milan: Mondadori, 2005) tells of a man, Lorenzo, who lives alone and works as a volunteer teacher in a prison. Among the prisoners is Lucia Adavastro, a former terrorist who has been in the maximum security wing for twenty years and has never asked for any of the favours to which she is entitled. The two discover they share an activist past, but the political dimension is eclipsed and once again the private is foregrounded. It emerges that the woman whom Lucia killed by accident was Lorenzo's girlfriend. *La quattordicesima commensale* by Gianni Marilotti (Nuoro: Il Maestrale, 2004) tells the story of Franca from the time when, *by chance*, when she was still a student, she joined the clandestine movement, to when she flees to Paris and later returns back to Italy, where 'rimaneva pur sempre un'ex terrorista, ricercata dalla polizia italiana, in possesso di una cospicua somma in danaro frutto di rapine ed azioni eversive' (p.281). Franca is alone, her mother is dead, she does not want to contact her family. She starts working for a NGO called 'Solidarietà e Pace'. When she goes back to Sardinia she is accused of crimes she did not commit, including abductions for extortion, but cannot reveal the truth because she would be charged as a terrorist. The ending seems inevitable. Franca, arrested and in custody, cuts her wrists and is found dead in her cell. In addition we could recall Teresa Zoni Zanetti, *Clandestina*, Rome: DeriveApprodi, 2000; Luca Doninelli, *Tornavamo dal mare*, Milan: Garzanti, 2004. In Mimmo Calopresti's film *La seconda volta* (Italy/France, 1996) the protagonist Lisa (Valeria Bruni Tedeschi) attributes her choice to enter the clandestine movement to chance: 'Lisa: Avevo appena dato il mio primo esame, era anche andato bene. È passato questo ragazzo, Gianni di Milano, lo avevo conosciuto il giorno stesso in una manifestazione a Milano. Aveva una pistola, mi ha chiesto se potevo tenerla a casa mia. Prof. Sajevo: E lei accettò?' Lisa: Sì, mi sembrava naturale. In quella manifestazione la polizia aveva ucciso uno studente ... Prof. Sajevo: Insomma successe tutto per caso? Lisa: No, immagino che prima o poi lo avrei fatto comunque... Una settimana dopo Gianni mi telefonò e voleva che gli portassi la pistola in una casa fuori città che usava come base. Io ci andai e ci rimasi. Una mattina la polizia fece una perquisizione, noi non c'eravamo ma io avevo lasciato lì i miei documenti e da quel momento cominciai la mia clandestinità.'

<sup>19</sup> 'Hegel characterizes the "beautiful soul" as a being defined by a mode of consciousness which allows him or her to protect "the appearance of purity by cultivating innocence about the historical course of the world"'. Jean Bethke Elshtain, *Women and War*, Sussex: Harvester, 1987, p. 4. The key passage is in G.W.F. Hegel, *The Phenomenology of Spirit*, trans. A.V. Miller, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1977, p. 400: 'in order to preserve the purity of its heart, it [spirit] flees from contact, with the actual world, and persists in its self-willed impotence to renounce its self which is reduced to the extreme of ultimate abstraction

### 3.2 Failed transgressions: *Ombre*, *La meglio gioventù*, *L'appuntamento*

The violence of conflict and war have always been considered typically masculine activities. Women who dedicate themselves to war in ancient myth do so by removing part of their femininity. The Amazons cut off one of their breasts so that they can wear the quiver across their shoulder; Athena is born from the head of Zeus; Clelia, in the *Aeneid*, is reared by her father and can become a great warrior only on the condition that she renounces love. The only forms of acceptable aggression conceded to women are those that can be accommodated within female stereotypes and the woman's presumed sphere of competence, for instance her struggle for food, or to save her children, or that which takes a self-directed form: 'autoaggressività, (...) pianto prolungato, (...) autocompassione'.<sup>20</sup> A degree of understanding is also often shown towards domestic violence exercised by women, whose causes are identified in poverty, ill-treatment by men and frustration. Society also seems able to understand, as Eileen MacDonald has suggested, cases where female violence derives from the need to defend oneself from an aggressor or when it is linked to a particular historical situation, such as in the Second World War. In all these cases violence is seen as a deviation from the woman's normal role.<sup>21</sup>

The representations of women who chose the armed struggle in Italy during the *anni di piombo* fit into none of these categories. Their choice is seen as a transgression not only of the legal norms of the state but also, above all, of cultural norms.<sup>22</sup> In the three texts I shall analyse in this part of the chapter, the women abandon their own

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(...). In its transparent purity of its moments, an unhappy, so-called "beautiful soul", its light dies away within it, and it vanishes like a shapeless vapour that dissolves into thin air'.

<sup>20</sup> Elena Giannini Belotti, *Dalla parte delle bambine*, Milan: Feltrinelli, 1973, pp. 46, 47.

<sup>21</sup> Eileen MacDonald, *Shoot the Women First*, London: Fourth Estate, 1991, p. 7.

<sup>22</sup> Francesca D'Angelo, 'Terrorismo di sinistra e storia di "genere": il caso delle Brigate rosse', in *Annale 1995-1996. L'attività di ricerca scientifica del dipartimento di discipline storiche dell'Università di Bologna*, Bologna: Clueb, 1998, p. 253.

children to take part in armed struggle, and thus go against their supposedly innate pacifistic and maternal nature in order to become warriors.

Political violence is thus represented, once again, through an almost exclusive attention to the activist's private life. However, there is an important difference between the works discussed here and those examined in Chapter Two which centred on conflicts between fathers and sons as part of an attempt to represent mainly the *causes* of young men's involvement in the armed struggle. Here, by contrast, the emphasis on the private dimension is designed to show also the *effects* of women's involvement in the armed group on themselves and on others, particularly their children. In this way the woman's choice is represented, in Rossana Rossanda's words, as the expression of that 'disumanità di chi in nome dell'umanità (...) dimentica gli umani, e fa vittime attorno a sé, fra coloro che più hanno amato'.<sup>23</sup>

The attention to the private domain ends up, once again, presenting political violence as an implosive phenomenon, the effects of which are shown within the individuals themselves and not on the outside, in the public sphere. Insofar as these texts do represent the causes, the reasons and processes underlying women's decision to engage in the armed struggle, these are again portrayed as belonging essentially to the private sphere and in this case, above all, to female psychology, where the decisions are attributable to a 'high level of emotional instability'.<sup>24</sup> Little attention is paid to the influence that might have come from former involvement in a legal political organization, to values, grievances and aspirations shared with others, that is to say to the trajectory of political socialization, which is barely touched upon in the texts and yet

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<sup>23</sup> The statement is in Rossanda's introduction to the Italian edition of von Trotta's script of *Die bleierne Zeit*: 'Introduzione. Due donne, anzi tre nella Germania di piombo', in Margarethe von Trotta, *Anni di piombo*, Milan: Ubulibri, 1982, p. xi.

<sup>24</sup> Loraine R. Gelsthorpe, 'Female Offending. A Theoretical Overview' in Gill McIvor (ed.), *Women Who Offend*, London and New York: Jessica Kingsley, 2004, p. 19.

which was often very important in reality. Donatella della Porta has emphasised the importance, in the choice of participation in the armed struggle, of the 'incentives to militancy', both symbolic and real, which it offered and which compensated for the sacrifices the activist had to make on joining the group.<sup>25</sup> Francesca D'Angelo has stressed the importance of extra-parliamentary experience as an 'antecedente immediato della scelta della lotta armata'.<sup>26</sup> She has also drawn attention to a dialectical relationship, for those women who chose armed struggle, between politico-military identity and female identity which was, she maintains, 'continua, complessa, non sempre palese'.<sup>27</sup> Furthermore, attention is rarely paid to relations with the feminist movement which, for some of these women, was the first arena of political involvement, nor to the issues for which it struggled, from equality in the workplace to divorce and abortion. Almost all the texts displace these aspects of the political activity of the period in their concentration on the personal and emotional level.<sup>28</sup>

*Ombre* by Carlo Castellaneta, published in 1982, tells the stories, opposed but parallel, of two characters. One is a middle-aged man, not clearly identified, a fascist, anti-semitic, linked to the Secret Services. The other is Marina, a woman belonging to an extreme left armed movement similar to the Red Brigades.<sup>29</sup> Here I shall deal just

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<sup>25</sup> Donatella della Porta, 'Gli incentivi alla militanza nelle organizzazioni clandestine di sinistra', in Raimondo Catanzaro (ed.), *Ideologie, movimenti, terrorismi*, Bologna: Il Mulino, 1990, p. 86.

<sup>26</sup> D'Angelo, 'Terrorismo di sinistra e storia di "genere": il caso delle Brigate rosse', p. 266.

<sup>27</sup> Francesca D'Angelo, 'Identità femminile e Brigate rosse', in *Storia e problemi contemporanei. Semestrale dell'Istituto Regionale per la storia del movimento di liberazione nelle Marche*, special issue: *Donne reali, donne immaginate*, edited by Luciano Casali, Daniella Gagliani, Mariuccia Salvati, December 1997, p. 134.

<sup>28</sup> An apparent – but only apparent – exception, is the intriguingly titled *1976 brigate rosse: operazione aborto*, a fictional text by Mauro Mellini published in 1974 (Rome: Savelli). The author projects himself forward by two years and imagines the future existence of a group called the 'Nuove Brigate Rosse'. In the story they are accused of having poured a drug called feapar into the water supply which made women reject the idea of abortion, causing a boom in the birthrate. The text is just a rather bad piece of political fantasy and a banal satire of both the Catholic Church and the armed movement.

<sup>29</sup> Carlo Castellaneta, *Ombre*, Milan: Rizzoli, 1982. *Ombre* was not the first work in which Castellaneta had showed an interest in the events of the *anni di piombo*. *La Paloma* (Milan: Rizzoli, 1972) was the story of an anarchist accused of a bombing; although recalling the figure of Giuseppe Pinelli, it was concerned to develop the account of a fictional character within a historical context. See Pietro

with Marina, who narrates in the first person the events of her life as a revolutionary and, more importantly, her reflections, the doubts and regrets that torment her.

In the opening chapter Marina is presented to the reader in three different roles: as a mother (it is in fact her 'ultima giornata di mamma' and she is at the zoo with her three-year-old son, Pinuccio); as an aspiring revolutionary, who has been given the task of making the phone call claiming responsibility for an assassination by the armed group she is about to join; and as a daughter at her parents' home. The family – in the sense of the extended group consisting of Marina, her son and her parents – is set up at the centre of the representation, to be criticized, denied and rejected:

Si ha un bel persuadersi e leggere e imparare che dall'istituto della famiglia discendono tutta una serie di umane bassezze: classismo, razzismo, senso di proprietà, egoismi d'ogni genere, ma quando tocca a te è come se fossi la prima ad affrontare questa rivoluzione sempre rimandata, questa contro la famiglia, l'unica che non si fa mai. (...) Mi è venuto in mente mio padre, la prima volta che passai fuori una notte per una festiciola studentesca, mi chiamò puttana e mi tirò una sberla. Dicono che si deve dimenticare il passato, lasciarsi alle spalle l'esistenza che fin qui abbiamo condotto e inventarci una nuova identità, quella rivoluzionaria.<sup>30</sup>

Marina is represented not only as a rebellious daughter but, above all, as Beverly Allen has suggested, as an 'unnatural mother' because she has decided to abandon her son to join a clandestine group. Allen claims that Castellaneta wanted to create a character with whom it is not easy to identify because she violates one of the fundamental cultural values of our society, and this makes her an outsider, external to the community to which the ideal reader feels he or she belongs. This stimulates an

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Ferrua, 'Impegno formalistico e impegno politico nel romanzo *La Paloma* di C. Castellaneta', *Forum Italicum*, Vol. 22, No. 1, Spring 1988, pp. 18-27.

<sup>30</sup> Castellaneta, *Ombre*, p. 69.



even stronger feeling of estrangement from and intolerance towards the phenomenon of political violence.<sup>31</sup>

Allen makes a pointed contrast here with *Caro Michele* and the implied reactions of readers to it and to Castellaneta's text. The protagonist of Ginzburg's novel is a son who goes away from home, leaves his mother and does not come back even for his father's funeral. Michele is also the putative father of the child of his ex-girlfriend, Mara, and, for a very brief period, stepfather to the children of his American wife from whom he then separates. All the members of his family worry about him but they do not think he can do anything wrong because they do not consider him an adult. Marina, on the contrary, is certainly the mother of her son and is an adult and, therefore, there can be no excuse for her behaviour. Unlike Michele, she can only be condemned, even if the condemnation is partial, mitigated by the description of her conflicting states of mind, her inner torment. Before abandoning her son to go into hiding she speaks about the rhetoric of motherhood, 'ma con delle cose vere che ogni tanto si affacciano dalle pieghe dei luoghi comuni', and worries about how her son will react: 'Non voglio neanche chiedermelo, se sentirà o no la mia mancanza, (...) perché se me lo chiedessi non avrei più la forza di questa decisione'.<sup>32</sup> Once she has entered the clandestine group she tries, after a series of cold and cynical reflections, to justify her choice:

Ma io, a furia di rimuovere il pensiero di Pinuccio, ho finito per allontanarlo davvero, quasi che non avessi mai avuto un bambino o forse mi tranquillizza il fatto che mia madre, come mamma, è più brava di me, e che a Pinuccio non ho mai dedicato molto tempo neanche prima.<sup>33</sup>

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<sup>31</sup> Beverly Allen, 'They're Not Children Anymore: The Novelization of "Italians" and "Terrorism"', in Beverly Allen and Mary Russo (eds), *Revisioning Italy*, Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1997, p. 66.

<sup>32</sup> Castellaneta, *Ombre*, p. 10.

<sup>33</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 89.

At other times she imagines she can explain the reasons for her choices to her son:

Quando penso al bambino mi ripeto che comunque alla sua età non si ha memoria di niente, e che quindi non mi ricorderebbe anche se gli fossi vicina, anzi penso che non senta molto la mia mancanza, l'ho abituato a essere indipendente come se avessi previsto inconsciamente di doverlo lasciare (...) e poi un giorno quando sarà grande gli racconterò tutto, spero solo che non sia qualcun altro a doverglielo raccontare (...).<sup>34</sup>

There are brief allusions to politics in the representation of Marina's ideals which, however, turn out to be naïve and discordant with those of the rest of the group, who do not seem to understand that some of their actions, such as the murder of the politician they have abducted, only serve to help those who stand over them and who have already made all the decisions for them.<sup>35</sup> Marina also feels let down by the dynamics within the hideout apartment that she and Giorgio, another member of the group, share, pretending to be a married couple. Although the home and the relationship are only a cover, Marina is treated by her male comrade as the 'housewife' and as a sexual object.<sup>36</sup> She rebels against this attitude, which she mostly feels to be an absurd continuation of her former life: 'Cos'è la vita: si parte per un'idea, convinti che ogni sera si canterà in coro su lottiam l'ideale nostro alfine sarà, e ti ritrovi a servire in tavola il capo, un altro marito che questa volta non hai neppure scelto'.<sup>37</sup>

At the end of the novel Castellaneta has Marina reflect on her errors and her failure in a way that deeply moralizes her story:

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<sup>34</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 68.

<sup>35</sup> 'Allora si doveva liberarlo. Ma questa eliminazione era già stata decisa. Decisa da qualcun altro, sopra le nostre teste' says Marina (Castellaneta, *Ombre*, p. 251).

<sup>36</sup> Women arouse less suspicion and, exploiting the stereotypes linked to female identity, often take on the role of mothers or sisters in the apartments used as hideouts. In the first meeting between Giorgio and Marina he immediately makes sexual advances: 'Sarà più di un mese che non tocco una donna'. She rejects him saying 'Credi che mi sia arruolata per fare marchette?'. Castellaneta, *Ombre*, pp. 32, 172.

Ero stata orgogliosa, e me ne compiacevo, di avere avuto il coraggio che poche hanno, di imboccare la via della resistenza armata, ma adesso mi sembra di aver avuto un'allucinazione, di essere una profuga da un territorio già invaso, come se avessimo sul collo il fiato degli inseguitori (...). È in nome di tutto questo che ho rinunciato a un figlio? a una vita come tutte? chiede la voce che ha rotto il bavaglio.<sup>38</sup>

The woman who wanted to be a 'comunista combattente' now feels she made a mistake and ends by experiencing her arrest as a relief, a liberation.

The motif of motherhood rejected in order to commit oneself to the armed struggle is also central to the character of Giulia (Sonia Bergamasco) in *La meglio gioventù* (2003), the six-hour saga directed by Marco Tullio Giordana from a script by Sandro Petraglia and Stefano Rulli. The film, shown in cinemas in two parts and on Italian television in four parts, recounts a long sweep of Italian history from 1966 to 2003 through the lives of the members of one family who, in the director's words, 'a vario titolo, sono investiti dalla storia, qualcuno in modo indiretto altri più da vicino'.<sup>39</sup> As in the texts I analysed in Chapter Two, the family is once again the preferred location in and through which to illustrate public events, 'il nucleo dell'immaginario dell'Italia', as Rulli and Petraglia have put it.<sup>40</sup> For Piero Spilla,

se lo sfondo pubblico (...) è trattato per rapidi cenni (...) la famiglia è luogo di pura messa in scena, dove Giordana si trova chiaramente a suo agio nel raccontare, con toni più distesi e toni di puro melò, 'il dolce rumore della vita' (...) i destini segnati di chi non riesce a trovare la propria strada.<sup>41</sup>

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<sup>37</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 168.

<sup>38</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 242, 243.

<sup>39</sup> 'Il cinema può essere ribellione. Intervista a Marco Tullio Giordana', *Carta*, 12/18, June 2003, Vol. V, No. 21, p. 46.

<sup>40</sup> M.R., 'Rulli e Petraglia: Our Generation', *Duel*, June-July 2003, No.105, p. 12.

<sup>41</sup> Piero Spilla, 'La porta', *CineCritica*, Vol. VIII, No.32, October-December 2003, pp. 26, 27.

The principal characters move through the years of protest and political violence and through other key events, including the law (*legge 180*) on the closure of long-stay mental institutions (1978) and the murder by the mafia (1992) of judge Giovanni Falcone. Matteo and Nicola, the two brothers whose stories are the two main pivots of the narrative, are different and conflicting personalities. Matteo (Alessio Boni) is ambiguous and negative. Failing to complete a literature degree, he joins the army, then the police, and finally commits suicide, whereas Nicola (Luigi Lo Cascio) graduates in medicine and pursues a successful career as a progressive psychiatrist. The two find themselves by chance in Florence in 1966 after the flood, one in uniform, the other as a volunteer, both of them trying to help the stricken city. It is then that Nicola meets Giulia, who will become his wife but who will subsequently leave him and their daughter, Sara, to join an armed group. The conflict over different political positions, taken to extremes in the relationship between brothers in Francesco Rosi's *Tre fratelli* (1981) and between sisters in Margaretha von Trotta's *Die bleierne Zeit* (1981), is touched on here in the relationship between the brothers Nicola and Matteo (though without falling into 'the trap of a straightforward good brother/bad brother narrative'),<sup>42</sup> but it takes a drastic form in the relationship between Nicola and Giulia. While Nicola decides to struggle against social injustice from within the institutions, fighting for the mentally ill to become more integrated into the community, Giulia decides to attack the institutions themselves from without and to go underground.

When Giulia first appears, in Florence after the flood, she is shown not in a group with the other volunteers but on her own, during a break, playing a piano with great accomplishment. Her difference from the others is expressed not only by her

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<sup>42</sup> David Forgacs, 'Our Friends from Turin', *Sight & Sound*, Vol. 14, No. 7, July 2004, p. 29.

musical ability but also by her physical characteristics, which seem markedly 'nordic' (an indirect allusion, perhaps, to West German terrorism, in which women played a more prominent role than in the Italian groups). We realize she is Italian only when she replies to Nicola, who, fascinated, has gone to speak to her. We later learn that she is from Turin, has studied piano, as her mother wanted, and is studying mathematics at university. No other information is given about her family and none emerges subsequently, not even when her daughter, Sara, is born. This might be interpreted as a deliberate omission, perhaps a sign that Giulia is in conflict with her (presumably middle-class) family or has broken off contact with them.

Giulia behaves increasingly as a woman who is anxious, nervous, permanently troubled, negative, turned in on herself, floating in an alienated dimension. When she decides to leave the marital home, in the middle of the night, to enter the clandestine life, she is discovered by Nicola who tries to stop her by blocking her exit, reminding her of their daughter, but she simply repeats, mechanically: 'Lasciami passare, lasciami passare'. Once again the political reasons are not clearly expressed and instead there is an 'emotive' portrayal of a woman who is sometimes prone to anger and seems to be dragged by an external force, her gaze fixed and staring, as if hypnotized, her body language betraying anxiety and agitation.<sup>43</sup> Here too there seem to be echoes of Lombroso, in his descriptions of one of the types of the delinquent woman, the hysteric:

il carattere è profondamente modificato in un egoismo, in una preoccupazione di se stessi (...) in un'irresponsabilità eccessiva, per cui un nulla le rende colleriche feroci, facili alle simpatie ed antipatie subitanee, irragionevoli, con volontà sempre instabile; (...)

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<sup>43</sup> Giulia has outbursts of anger both before she enters the armed group, when she argues with Nicola and Matteo, and afterwards. Her verbal clash with Matteo is interesting. In fact although they are on opposite sides of the barricades both seem to show the same aggressiveness. The difference lies in how this is manifested: in Matteo it has become a desire for discipline, in Giulia's for subversion.

È l'isterico ipnotizzato, insomma, un automa obbediente, senza spontaneità, alla volontà altrui; (...)

Il disordine maniaco si accompagna ad allucinazioni e ad impulsioni, ad un bisogno continuo di agitazione (...) di rompere e di abbattere quanto trovano sulla loro via; (...). Un altro carattere che fa l'isterico simile all'epilettico, sono le fughe, i viaggi più strani, in parte coscienti, in parte no.<sup>44</sup>

The only sequences which refer to Giulia's political trajectory are those of the demonstrations in Turin in which she takes part with Nicola (dated, in the film's superimposed titles, respectively February 1968 and 1972) and that of the meeting (in 1977) at her flat of a group of comrades who speak in stock phrases of the 'bisogno del comunismo [which] può portare a mettere tutto in discussione, anche a morire, a combattere', while Giulia's four-year-old daughter Sara is left on her own drawing in the kitchen. From that moment on Giulia is shown as a mother who cares little for her young daughter. She says to her mother-in-law, making a comparison between herself and Francesca (Valentina Carnelutti), her husband's younger sister: 'Francesca ci sa fare coi bambini... Io non sono capace, non mi viene'.

After having gone underground, Giulia is gripped by torment for having left her daughter. About four years later she arranges with Nicola to turn up at a museum in Turin where he has taken Sara. In a painful scene, Giulia walks up to her daughter from behind but, although Sara turns round, she does not recognize her. The second arrangement to see Sara, in Rome, is used by Nicola as an occasion to set a police trap and have her arrested, in order to prevent her, as he puts it, from killing someone or getting herself killed.

After Giulia's arrest there is another harrowing sequence, in which she speaks to Sara through the glass of the prison visiting room: 'Sara, tesoro, guardami....come sei

diventata grande...Sara, tesoro, guardami'. But the child only manages to say, seeing her mother's dyed black hair: 'Ma tu prima non avevi i capelli biondi?'.<sup>45</sup> Giulia tells her that she will have blond hair again. The scene fades out and when the next fades in we see Giulia, years later, with white hair, in a maximum security prison in Spoleto, still alone, still anxious and tormented. From the words of Sara, now a young woman, to her father we understand that she and her mother have not been reconciled: 'Gli altri non avevano figli, potevano fare della loro vita quello che volevano. Lei no. (...) Fa bene a sentirsi in colpa'. The daughter here shows an inflexibility similar to that of the son Emilio in *Colpire al cuore*.

Motherhood is also used to characterize the other women in the film in a moralistic way. Nicola and Matteo's mother Adriana (Adriana Asti) feels guilty: 'Non sono stata una buona madre per Matteo'. However, at the end of her life, widowed, she is fulfilled as grandmother to Matteo's posthumous son and lives out her last days happily in Stromboli with the little boy and his mother, Mirella (Maya Sansa). Francesca is also fulfilled as wife and mother of three children. Giovanna (Lidia Vitale), the older sister of Nicola and Matteo, has, on the other hand, renounced motherhood for her career, which she feels to be her mission, as a lawyer and then a judge. She embodies, according to Rulli and Petraglia, 'il senso della responsabilità. È una donna che nasce nel 1940 e decide (...) di fare il magistrato. Da quel momento nasconde le sue emozioni, rinuncia alla femminilità'.<sup>46</sup> Women's social commitment – Giulia's against

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<sup>44</sup> Lombroso, *La donna delinquente*, pp. 610, 611, 615, 616.

<sup>45</sup> The suffering of the encounter in prison between mother and daughter, separated by the glass panel of the interview room, is movingly recounted in the life story of Adriana Faranda, who left her daughter Alexandra to join the Red Brigades: 'nella sua perizia l'esperta era riuscita a dimostrare quale enorme sofferenza costituisse per la piccola [Alexandra] vedere la madre prigioniera attraverso quella "lastra di cristallo". Non poterla toccare si traduceva nel vivere, anche in quei pochi istanti, la separatezza cruenta dal suo oggetto d'amore', Silvana Mazzocchi, *Nell'anno della tigre. Storia di Adriana Faranda*, Milan: Baldini & Castoldi, 1994, p. 184.

<sup>46</sup> M.R., 'Rulli e Petraglia: Our Generation', p.11.

the law, Giovanna's for the law – seems to exclude the possibility of being a mother and to demonstrate the incompatibility between the public and private spheres.

Towards the end of the film Giulia tries to move on. She has been released from prison and has a job, but her rehabilitation happens mostly through her attempt to recover her relationship with her daughter, to whom she decides to write:

Sara, amore mio, lavoro ormai da un po' di tempo a Firenze in un archivio. L'altro giorno mi è capitata tra le mani una pubblicazione del 1966, e ho trovato una foto e ho pensato che ti avrebbe fatto piacere vedere come erano tuo padre e tua madre da ragazzi, e questo per dirti che sei nata dall'amore di due persone allegre e che tutto quello che è accaduto di triste è accaduto dopo e non riguardava te. Sto provando a ricominciare, lontano da tutti. So di essere una presenza ingombrante, cerco di non dare fastidio a nessuno.

After receiving the letter Sara goes to find her mother, who seems to have waited for nothing else all her life. They go shopping together and bond. The motif of rediscovered motherhood marks one of the closing moments of the film when Sara confides to her 'rediscovered' mother that she is expecting a baby.

In *L'appuntamento*, too, the protagonist, Linda (Gianna Breil), is a woman who in the past (not shown in this film) has chosen the armed struggle. She is now semi-free: during the day she is allowed out to work at a *centro sociale* in Rome, where she teaches ballet dancing to a group of children, but in the evenings she has to return to prison. The real punishment for Linda is not detention but the coldness of her daughter Rosa (Alessia Fugardi). The girl does not 'recognize' her: 'Ora io sono sola. (...) Non ho più madre, ho perso anche lei'. Like Giulia in *La meglio gioventù*, Linda is represented as anxious and tormented, preyed upon by a sense of guilt not only for having abandoned her daughter but also, in this case, for not having managed to prevent the death of her daughter's father, 'ucciso sul Gianicolo, da uno dei nostri stessi compagni'.



In one of the first scenes of the film we see Linda being knocked down as she walks towards the *centro sociale* by a car driven by an arrogant and ill-mannered character, Romano (Antonio Molinari). We discover that he is involved in some shady business and is also serving an eviction order on the *centro sociale*. Romano takes her with him to an appointment with a lawyer whom Linda knows and wants to meet. He is an ex-comrade, implicated in the killing of her daughter's father (it appears that he was shot for fear that he would turn informer), and now implicated in trafficking children as well as being responsible for the eviction order. Thanks to her ability, Linda manages to prevent the closure of the centre (which Rosa also attends) and above all to save a nine-year-old Kurdish girl who has been brought to Italy from Turkey to be sold to a wealthy paedophile. Both in the sequence where she rescues the girl and the one when she confronts the lawyer, Linda wields a gun, but this time it is for a good purpose, to restore justice. Through these positive actions Linda tries to re-establish her relationship with her daughter and, above all, tries to play her part in changing society legally.

The film, overall, highlights the painful experiences of women. They are assaulted, they run away, and they are fundamentally alone, even if they try to help each other. Even Rosa in the last scene is attacked and saved by her best friend, who then herself gets killed. Linda tries to comfort her daughter but she seems to reject any kind of approach:

Rosa: Che cosa vuoi da me?.

Linda: Niente, parlarti se hai bisogno di qualcosa.

Rosa: Perché non mi lasci in pace? Vattene! Non hai capito che non ti voglio vedere? Vattene!

Linda: No, ti prego... La condanna peggiore me la dai tu, Rosa.

Rosa: Lo so.

The action of the film takes place in central Rome within a single day. It is a positive parable about the character of Linda who struggles to build her life outside prison and regain everything she had chosen to renounce on joining the armed struggle: the value of motherhood, a job, the desire to fight peacefully for a better world. She even manages to reform Romano who, in the end, falls in love with her. Despite all this, Linda is portrayed as a woman alone, who, as she says repeatedly during the film (dedicated 'a tutte le donne sole'), is paying for her mistake. Only right at the end are there signs of a reconciliation with her daughter, on two levels: in the present, when Rosa gives her a cassette tape as a present, and in memory: the film ends on a slow-motion sequence of Linda with Rosa as a child, playing the piano and hugging each other.

Motherhood was also one of the central themes of *Die bleierne Zeit* (1981), which, although it is about the armed struggle in West Germany, is worth mentioning here by way of cross reference since it contains both the motif of the woman terrorist who abandons her child and that of the double, which features in the texts I am going to examine in the next part of this chapter. Marianne (Barbara Sukowa), who has chosen to join the armed struggle, entrusts her son, Jan, to his father, her former partner Werner who, in turn, leaves the boy with Marianne's sister, Juliane (Jutta Lampe). The sister does not want to be responsible for him and subsequently decides to have him adopted, with Marianne's agreement. Here the rejection of motherhood by both women is total:

- Juliane: Jan is staying with me. Perhaps you'd like to tell me what should do with him.  
 Marianne: Why is he with you? Hasn't Werner sorted that out?  
 Juliane: He dumped him on me. Or did you think he would deposit him in a bank hoping you might turn up there?  
 Marianne: You must look after him.

- Juliane        I've already done my maternal duties when I was a child. With you as the little one.
- Marianne:    But Jule, it's entirely different now. I don't know anyone, I can't take him with me.
- Juliane:       So you've finally managed to force on me the life you no longer want to lead.<sup>47</sup>

If Marianne has refused to be a mother in order to pursue her ideals, Juliane rejects maternity because she does not want children. At first she does not want to have anything to do with Jan. She refuses to allow Marianne to impose on her a life that she herself has decided she does not want to lead. When Sabine (Verenice Rudolph), her doctor friend, tells her she is pregnant, Juliane's reaction is cold and detached.

All of the texts I have examined here suggest that that the dominant cultural imaginary considers the woman above all as potential mother and as destined to failure every time she rejects the maternal role. This emphasis on the woman's 'aberrant' choice to reject motherhood is also found in some psychological accounts of the woman terrorist. Anita von Raffay, in an article published in 1980, suggested that women who took up the armed struggle were driven by a 'mother complex' and that their violence expressed rage not just against the father (their male victims) but also against the mother, both their own mother and the maternal role within themselves: 'in the man [whom she kills] the woman fights not only the father but above all also the mother and therewith dependence on her.'<sup>48</sup> This type of psychoanalytic reading interprets female

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<sup>47</sup> Margarethe von Trotta, *Die bleierne Zeit und andere Filmtex te*, ed. Günter Agde, Berlin: Henschelverlag, 1998, p. 143. (JULIANE, *hart*: Jan ist bei mir. Würdest du mir vielleicht sagen, was ich mit ihm tun soll? *Marianne ist jetzt doch erschrocken*. MARIANNE: Wieso bei dir? Hat Werner das nicht noch geregelt? JULIANE: Er hat ihn bei mir abgesetzt. Oder hätte er ihn in einer Bank abliefern sollen, in der Hoffnung, daß du dort auftauchst! *Marianne ist einen Augenblick ratlos*. MARIANNE: Du mußt dich um ihm kümmern. JULIANE *schüttelt den Kopf*: Meine Mutterpflichten hab ich als Kind abgeleistet. An euch Kleinen. MARIANNE: Aber Jule, das ist doch jetzt etwas völlig anderes. Ich weiß niemand, ich kann ihn schließlich nicht mitnehmen. JULIANE, *bitter*: Womit du es endgültig geschafft hättest, mir das Leben aufzuzwingen, das du nicht mehr führen willst.)

<sup>48</sup> Anita von Raffay, 'Hoffnung, ein Prinzip des Terrorismus', *Analytische Psychologie. Zeitschrift für Analytische Psychologie und ihre Grenzgebiete*, Vol. 11, No. 1 (1980), p. 44 ('die Frau in dem Mann

political violence as a devaluation of femininity, a rejection of womanhood. Already in 1944 Helene Deutsch had stressed, as Loraine Gelsthorpe has reminded us, 'the normal passivity of women and their determination to be wives and mothers and argued thus that women offenders were personality disordered'.<sup>49</sup>

As a result of this emphasis on maternity and the deviation from it, the political trajectories of the women in these stories who choose armed struggle are simplified, often nullified. The political and ideological reasons that Giulia in *La meglio gioventù* and Linda in *L'appuntamento* give to their children, or those that Marina in *Ombre* tries to give to herself, are superficial. They are mostly linked, as I noted at the beginning of the chapter, to the sphere of irrationality and emotion and they therefore sanction the view that woman is naturally a 'private' rather than a public subject.<sup>50</sup> We do, it is true, see sequences in which Giulia takes part in demonstrations and in a meeting of her collective during the years of conflict, but it is still more significant that, when her husband tries to stop her at the door of their apartment, when she decides to leave during the night, she can only plead 'lasciami passare, lasciami passare' as if impelled by a force that is stronger than her. When Marina first goes into clandestinity she is naively jubilant about her new life, only to be let down shortly afterwards:

è fatta, ho pensato, sono dentro anch'io, sono una comunista combattente, sono la punta della lancia, la punta di diamante come tante volte avevo letto, adesso sono anch'io nel partito armato, il partito dei pochi, dei puri, con l'entusiasmo di una missionaria che ha rifiutato il mondo, come se (...) stessi cominciando davvero a dar l'assalto al cielo, (...) primo giorno da sovversiva professionista

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nicht nur den Vater, sondern vor allem auch die Mutter bekämpft und damit die Abhängigkeit von ihr.') Raffay notes that women terrorists in West Germany played a prominent role in the abduction and killing of the male victims Siegfried Buback, Jürgen Ponto, Hanns-Martin Schleyer, Günter von Drenckmann and Peter Lorenz. I should like to thank Paul Connerton for reading this article and discussing it with me.

<sup>49</sup> Gelsthorpe, 'Female Offending', p. 19.

<sup>50</sup> Jean Bethke Elshtain, *Public Man, Private Woman*, Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1981, p. 3.

eppure sentivo irrobustite le mie radici di classe con una fierezza che non provavo da tempo.<sup>51</sup>

Like Chiara in *Buongiorno, notte*, Marina opposes murder, despite having chosen the armed struggle, and recalls the Resistance as a model for the struggle:

se è vero che siamo forti dobbiamo dimostrarlo rinunciando a esecuzioni da malavita che sembrano regolamenti di conti, mentre vorrei che ci prodigassimo in azioni simboliche, in lanci di volantini nei cinema come ai tempi della Resistenza (...).<sup>52</sup>

Linda in *L'appuntamento* scarcely mentions her own motives 'allora si uccideva per gli ideali e ora non sono rimaste che macerie'.

The woman's reconciliation with herself and with the world can only be achieved, in these representations, when she decides to conform to those norms she had formerly rejected, when she accepts work and recovers, albeit with difficulty, her relationship with her children, which gives a new direction to her life. In itself, this emphasis on the woman's need to rebuild relationships is not surprising. In a study of women who had been released from prison, Mary Eaton identified a number of strategies they adopted to take control of their lives again and these included, particularly, the attempt to repair relationships with their children and the construction of a 'network based on equality':

Prison is a place which separates people and severs relationships. (...) Coming out of prison, they [mothers] were confronted with the task of reconstructing a relationship with children who had learned to look elsewhere for nurturing support and love.<sup>53</sup>

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<sup>51</sup> Castellaneta, *Ombre*, pp. 19-20.

<sup>52</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 171.

<sup>53</sup> Mary Eaton, *Women after Prison*, Buckingham: Open University Press, 1993, p. 91.

What is more surprising is that the representation in these texts of the woman's retrieval of the maternal role is not accompanied by any representation of her recognition of her own past reasoning, the personal political journey which led her to leave her child in the first place. Even more surprising is that the 'maternal dimension' is dominant even in representations that focus on the period spent in clandestinity.

In the case of the character Marina in *Ombre*, the main change within her comes when she realizes the error she made in abandoning her child and when she accepts jail as a liberation, an attitude which again recalls the hysterical personality described by Lombroso: 'Le isteriche sono, come gli alcolisti, calme nel carcere e non protestano contro la pena'.<sup>54</sup> The 'recognition' of their errors by the unnatural mothers and the path towards the final symbolic agnition between them and their children seems to have, as in the plots of classical drama, the ability to re-establish the order of things and of consciences.

### **3.3 The female double: the unrepentant woman and the good other: *Voi grandi*, 'Lettera non chiusa', *La guerra di Nora***

In this part of the chapter I shall look at three texts about women who have taken part in the armed struggle, are now in prison or on the run and attempt to communicate with the people with whom they shared the period of struggle. All three are characterized by the presence of a figure of the *double*. Whereas the conflict of the woman terrorist in the texts in the first part was expressed mainly as an inner torment over what she had to renounce in her private life, here the torment is externalized and emphasised by the creation of a good double 'by division', to use the terminology of Robert Rogers, that is

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<sup>54</sup> Lombroso, *La donna delinquente*, p. 616.

to say a figure who is opposed to that of the protagonist.<sup>55</sup> Rogers has identified as one of the functions of the double the illustration of 'intrapsychic' conflict by means of a 'splitting up of a composite character [which] tends to enhance the dramatic qualities of that conflict'.<sup>56</sup> In this way 'the intimate becomes distanced'.<sup>57</sup>

The motif of the 'double' or *Doppelgänger* is recurrent and pervasive in western literature, from Euripides's *Helen* to Plato's *Menaechmi* and Oscar Wilde's *The Picture of Dorian Gray*. Although the double can take many different forms (twin, identical lookalike, shadow, portrait, reflection, mirror) it is always the manifestation of an other with respect to the self, yet which retains a strong tie with the self, showing its opposite side, which is often dark, and always hidden, repressed. Emerging in dreams or from the need to observe one's own life from a different point of view, the double always has to do with the desire to investigate one's own psyche in order to achieve self-knowledge.

A distinctive feature of the doubles in the works I shall examine here lies in the fact that, rather than displaying the 'dark side' of the protagonist, they represent a positive side which she has denied or repressed. Thus, many of the characteristics commonly assigned to the double are found here instead in the host. In these texts the double does not appear and operate, as it does elsewhere, as 'a figure of displacement',

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<sup>55</sup> Rogers distinguishes between 'doubling by multiplication and doubling by division'. In the first case there are several figures whose characteristics are not opposed to one another but which, added together, create an ideal character. Robert Rogers, *A Psychoanalytic Study of the Double in Literature*, Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1970, p. 5.

<sup>56</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 172. As well as the first function of the double indicated by Rogers, namely 'dramatic conflict', it is worth mentioning the others briefly. The second, directly connected to the first, is the 'representability' of dreams, desires and fears, in which the double is interpreted as an 'ego-split'. The third function is to make a 'balanced appeal to the reader's psychological makeup'. The fourth is to 'stimulate defensive adaptations' on the part of the writer, character or reader who can project into the double either negative aspects ('the unwanted "thing"') or positive ones with which he or she prefers to identify. The fifth function is related to 'defence' and is described as 'distortion or censor'. Rogers emphasises the importance for the author of not being 'fully cognizant' of the psychological implications of his or her work, and of thus allowing the reader to absorb some of the text's meanings 'unconsciously'. The last function is the 'establishment of an esthetic distance (...). A kind of equilibrium becomes established such that the reader may introject the potentially disturbing elements of the work without experiencing undue anxiety'. Rogers, *A Psychoanalytic Study of the Double in Literature*, pp. 172-74.

<sup>57</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 173.

the 'product of a broken family', or a sign of the 'dysfunction in the family romance of structured well-being'.<sup>58</sup> Rather, the double here represents the possibility of a future, of life, which is denied to the host who lives in the past. Nevertheless, the doubles in these texts do still create, through the contrast with the host, a sense of the 'uncanny', Freud's *unheimlich*, with its accompanying characteristics of unease, loss of identity, alienation and a sense of impending death.<sup>59</sup> The connection with death, which Otto Rank identified, before Freud, with the double, is transferred here to the host, the female protagonist, who dies, disappears or experiences a figurative death: the woman in Erri De Luca's story remains locked up in prison; Marina in *Voi grandi* disappears without trace; Nora in *La guerra di Nora* commits suicide.<sup>60</sup>

The conflict in these texts is initially between two characters but it then becomes triangular when a third character enters. Studies of the double have emphasized that the conflict between host and double can often 'expand'. Rogers talks of both 'dual and multiple fragmentation', and 'decomposition'.<sup>61</sup> Andrew Webber notes that in *Doppelgänger* stories

the dyadic scheme is typically undone by a triangle of desire, the potential of which apparently lies in the rivalry of host and double over a female third party. But there is also the possibility of short-circuit along the male side of the triangle.<sup>62</sup>

<sup>58</sup> Andrew J. Webber, *The Doppelgänger: Double visions in German Literature*, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1996, pp. 4, 5.

<sup>59</sup> Freud wrote that 'the "double" was originally an insurance against the destruction of the ego, an energetic denial of the power of death, as Rank says; and probably the "immortal" soul was the first double in the body. (...) Such ideas, however, have sprung from the soil of unbounded self-love, from the primary narcissism which dominates the mind of the child and the primitive man. But when this stage has been surmounted, the "double" reverses its aspect. From having been an assurance of immortality it becomes the uncanny harbinger of death'. Sigmund Freud, *The Uncanny*, *The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud*, ed. and trans. James Strachey, vol. XVII, London: Hogarth Press, 1955, p. 235 (paper originally written in German in 1919).

<sup>60</sup> Otto Rank, *The Double: A Psychoanalytical Study* [written 1914; first German edition 1925], London: Karnac, 1971, p. 79.

<sup>61</sup> Rogers, *A Psychoanalytic Study of the Double in Literature*, p. 4.

<sup>62</sup> Webber, *The Doppelgänger*, p. 18.



Conflict is thus structured as a triangle in this group of texts, as it was in some of the those we examined in Chapter Two. In those, however, the central conflict was between two male characters, father and son, whereas the female character – the mother, or a woman in whom both males took an interest – remained in the background. Here, on the other hand, all three of the figures in the triangle – woman, woman and man – are important. These texts also differ, importantly, from the ones discussed in the preceding part of this chapter where the former female terrorist undertook a process of change to become the *good one*: in *La meglio gioventù* and *L'appuntamento* by becoming a good mother. Here, by contrast, the *good one* is another woman, the ex-terrorist's double, who embodies those traditional feminine attributes and represents what she might have been but was not. The ex-terrorist herself, on the contrary, does not appear repentant. She is uncompromising, not so much because she would like to continue the political fight as because she will not deny her own past and seems unable to create a new life.

*Voi grandi* by Lidia Ravera relates the encounter between Marianna, Sergio and Laura. Marianna was involved in the past in an armed group, Sergio is an ex-comrade and her former partner and Laura is the young woman whom Sergio has now decided to marry. The action of the novel takes place in the three days before Sergio and Laura's wedding, from Friday – when Marianna reappears in Sergio's life – to Sunday. Marianna (who has had plastic surgery to avoid being recognized and caught) is desperate and hopes her one-time companion will welcome her, but he has remade his life, is about to get married and feels frightened and threatened by Marianna's unexpected reappearance. During the night between Saturday and Sunday, after spending the evening together, Sergio and Marianna argue, he becomes exasperated and hits her. He is afraid that he has killed her, but does not go to her aid, and in this way

she is transformed from aggressor to victim. Immediately after his wedding to Laura, where he turns up visibly upset, he confesses to her his presumed murder (Laura shows herself to be accommodating and complicit: 'Adesso sei mio marito. Io sono tua moglie. E dobbiamo stare insieme. (...) Calmati – disse – non è successo nulla').<sup>63</sup> Laura goes with Sergio to his apartment to remove Marianna's body, but she had only passed out and has now disappeared. The story closes with the discovery of this uncommitted crime and Marianna's disappearance to an unknown destination.

The plot is structured on the dual opposition between Laura and Marianna and between Marianna and Sergio. Laura represents the positive alternative to Marianna, her positive double, that which Marianna is not and was not when she was Laura's age. For Sergio the comparison between the two women, as in medieval love poetry, starts from the gaze:

i suoi occhi [di Marianna] gli erano rimasti conficcati dentro. (...) Sergio provò a sostituire gli occhi di Laura, neri e davvero grandi, agli occhi sottili e azzurri della donna. Tentò la carta del confronto: giovani e fiduciosi gli occhi di Laura, sempre un po' umidi, un po' da animalino. Freddi e attenti, gli occhi della donna [Marianna].<sup>64</sup>

Era certamente autosuggestione, ma lui, quegli occhi [Marianna's], li conosceva. Li aveva amati e li aveva detestati. Aveva ostacolato, sentendosi debole, la loro forza di coinvolgimento. Li aveva sognati spesso, e per molti anni. (...) Erano occhi capaci di instaurare con chiunque rapporti di belligeranza permanente.<sup>65</sup>

Laura is twenty and studies architecture. She is described as:

cresciuta con le unghie pulite e le lezioni di inglese. Affettuosa ed equilibrata. Con le spalle da lottatrice e una sicurezza sociale di quelle che non si apprendono leggendo i galatei delle riviste, all'interesse politico preferisce l'amore, ereditato dal padre, per le barche.<sup>66</sup>

<sup>63</sup> Lidia Ravera, *Voi grandi*, Rome and Naples: Theoria, 1990, pp. 150, 153.

<sup>64</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 12.

<sup>65</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 13, 14.

<sup>66</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 20.

Marianna, by contrast, 'a vent'anni, era una bomba innescata (...). Una provocatrice', an activist who 'nei luoghi più sperduti cercava affannosamente quotidiani e riviste. Telefoni'.<sup>67</sup> Sergio describes her as a 'donna violenta. Una terrorista. Una esibizionista. Un caso clinico, espresso da quella fucina di nevrosi meravigliose che erano gli anni Settanta'.<sup>68</sup> The negative characterization of Marianna emerges not only from what is said about her past but also from how she is represented in the present: alone, tormented, full of hatred, sleepless, sexually uninhibited, sometimes on drugs, perpetually on the run. These characteristics remind us once again of the hysterical women described by Lombroso:

Spiccato loro carattere è l'erotismo. Vero è che questo da alcuni si nega: spesso esse si danno (secondo Legrand) all'uomo, piuttosto che per libidine, per spirito di avventura, per bisogno di emozioni impreviste, o per lampi di passione, più brevi che forti: ma io osservo che, ad ogni modo, l'elemento sessuale è latente anche qui; e d'altronde se veramente moltissime sono apatiche alcune sono eccitatissime.

Un'altra isterica, prostituta, che lunghi anni di sua vita aveva passato errando in molte lontane città, ricca, ma dissipatrice incorreggibile, traeva nelle sue stanze uomini, cui sottraeva o denaro od oggetti di valore, approfittando del momento del coito.<sup>69</sup>

Ravera, then, has created a pathological personality, a disturbed and ruthless woman. The two women's respective relationships with their families of origin are particularly emphasised and this contributes to highlighting the difference between them, even though they are both from bourgeois backgrounds.<sup>70</sup> Laura lives with her

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<sup>67</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 47, 42.

<sup>68</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 19.

<sup>69</sup> Lombroso, *La donna delinquente*, pp. 613, 619.

<sup>70</sup> It is interesting to note once again a foreign element: Marianna pretends to be German and also speaks other languages fluently.

family in a 'saldamente borghese' house, she has a very close relationship with her father whom she wants to please and admits she respects more than Sergio, who is only a few years younger than him.<sup>71</sup> Marianna, on the contrary, is an example of a rebellious daughter. She lost contact with her own parents many years before, even though 'Il viso di sua madre, simile al viso che lei aveva alterato chirurgicamente, la aspettava da qualche parte nel sonno'.<sup>72</sup> She will learn from Sergio that both her parents in fact died some time ago, her mother apparently as a result of the shock of discovering that her daughter was a terrorist:

Marianna... anche tua madre è morta. È morta.... subito dopo.(...) Avrebbe voluto dire: subito dopo che tu hai ammazzato un uomo e l'identikit del volto grazioso, del grosso naso di sua figlia ha incominciato a guardarla da tutti i giornali. È tuo padre che si è risposato, che ha dimenticato, o almeno ci ha provato. Ed è morto dodici anni dopo, tua madre è morta quasi subito. Subito dopo. Per un alquanto imprevedibile collasso cardiocircolatorio.<sup>73</sup>

In the delineation of Marianna's character, as in that of other women terrorists, the ideological motives that led her to choose the armed struggle are absent. The social factors (such as her class origin) are touched on but they always have an individualistic dimension. Nor is her former involvement in a political party recorded as significant. As well as through her pathological personality and this absence of a political biography, Marianna's negativity is reinforced by the contrast between her and Sergio, who has remade his life, even though this is depicted with a good dose of irony:

aveva comperato la televisione, poi un impianto stereofonico, una lavatrice e infine un forno, macchiandosi di uno dei peggiori delitti di lesa diversità: il pagamento rateale, come uno che riceve lo stipendio da impiegato.

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<sup>71</sup> Ravera, *Voi grandi*, p. 17.

<sup>72</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 62.

<sup>73</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 51.

Tale era diventato, passando da una dignitosa disoccupazione (...), all'insegnamento, non stabile, poi più stabile, e infine bene, di ruolo. Si era sentito sminuito e anche intimidito da quella parte così vecchia e così odiata, che pure gli pareva di interpretare con grazia sublime, con la dovuta malinconia, quasi genialmente.<sup>74</sup>

Marianna has also changed but only externally, through the plastic surgery: 'No, dentro non sono cambiata. Anzi, odio di più. Odio l'idiozia. L'America, la grande America in cui sono stata costretta a vivere...la meschinità, i piccoli obiettivi, la carrierina, i soldi (...)'.<sup>75</sup> The plastic surgery, the second face, reminds us of Pirandello's motif of the mask, but unlike Pirandello's characters, in Marianna there is no corresponding change in role to accompany the change of mask, nor is there a change in other people's perceptions of her. The irreversibility of her condition lies also in the fact that, unlike Sergio, she has killed. In this way Ravera appears to corroborate the stereotype of the woman as more ruthless than the man.<sup>76</sup> The title of Eileen MacDonald's book, *Shoot the Women First*, makes reference precisely to this belief in the greater danger posed by women and recalls the advice that was given to the members of the West German anti-terrorist squads:

For anyone who loves his life, it is a very clever idea to shoot the women first. From my experience, women terrorists have much stronger characters, more

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<sup>74</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 25.

<sup>75</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 48.

<sup>76</sup> On the link between aggression and crime there are contrasting theories. Some claim that men are biologically more disposed to violent and aggressive behaviour than women (see, for example, Eleanor E. Maccoby and Carol Nagy Jacklin, *The Psychology of Sex Differences*, Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1975 and Katherine Dalton *The Premenstrual Syndrome and Progesterone Therapy*, London: Heinemann Medical, 1977; the latter, on the basis of a study of a group of women in prison, concluded that women commit crimes particularly during their period). Among the non-biologicistic explanations are those of Freda Adler who emphasised above all the social reasons for women's crime. She claims that greater equality between the sexes has led to the 'entrance of women into the major leagues of crime [and that this] underscores the point that the incidence and kinds of crime are more closely associated with social than sexual factors.' *Sisters in Crime*, New York: McGraw-Hill, 1975, p. 27.

power, more energy. There are examples where men waited a moment before they fired, and women at once. This is a general phenomenon with terrorists.<sup>77</sup>

The narrative voice of Luce D'Eramo's story engages sarcastically with this stereotype:

Le donne, si sa, sono creature più irrazionali degli uomini. (...) Guai se si armano, sono spietate guerriere (...). Se poi sono anche scostumate, la loro ferocia è senza limiti. Le terroriste d'oggi, certo, sono a un livello molto più basso, sbadate e insieme succube, e sanguinarie di formato piccolo borghese.<sup>78</sup>

A sense of waste emerges from the description of Marianna's life, of politics experienced as a series of self-destructive actions, triggered by the will to rebel against the family and against paternal authority, which have brought about her total downfall:

La smania di rivoluzione, in Marianna, era un'evoluzione di estremista dello snobismo di suo padre. (...) Per tutta la giovinezza Marianna si era sentita depositaria, non meno di suo padre, di alcune complicate verità da cui i più erano esclusi.<sup>79</sup>

(...) lei che sapeva soltanto negare, conosceva soltanto ciò da cui scappava. La famiglia. Mamma, papà, bambina. La laurea, le serate con gli amici a sforzarsi di ridere. I vestiti, lo stereo, le vacanze. Il vuoto. Lei scappava dal vuoto. Con audacia, serietà e fiducia, rifiutava. I giornali, le balle che raccontavano i giornali. Le opinioni, l'orgia delle opinioni. Il mondo trasudava opinioni (...). Lei aveva esploso due colpi di pistola contro il vuoto. Che qualcuno fosse morto non la riguardava. Nemici di classe? Nemmeno. Bastava sostituire alla parola giornalista, la parola giornale. Diventava un bersaglio di carta...Ma ora non voleva pensare.<sup>80</sup>

Ravera had written about her generation also in other novels – *Porci con le ali* (with Marco Lombardo Radice), *Ammazzare il tempo*, *Bambino mio* and *Per funghi* – but in

<sup>77</sup> MacDonald, *Shoot the Women First*, p. 4.

<sup>78</sup> D'Eramo, 'Tra i pensieri di una terrorista rossa', p. 134.

<sup>79</sup> Ravera, *Voi grandi*, p. 40.

<sup>80</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 67.

*Voi grandi* she wanted to focus in particular on a woman who, to use Sandra Gilbert and Susan Gubar's term, might be defined as a 'madwoman'.<sup>81</sup> In their reflections on female authorship in the nineteenth century, Gilbert and Gubar interpret the creation of the character of the 'madwoman' in the fictional texts of a number of women writers as the sign of their opposition to those patriarchal structures which found themselves indirectly represented in the heroines. These writers were creating, in the madwoman, their own double:

by projecting their rebellious impulses not into their heroines but into mad and monstrous women (who are suitably punished in the course of the novel or poem), female authors dramatize their own self-division, their desire both to accept the structures of patriarchal society and to reject them. What this means, however, is that the madwoman in literature by women is not merely, as she might be in male literature, an antagonist or foil to the heroine. Rather, she is usually in some sense, the *author's* double, an image of her own anxiety and rage.<sup>82</sup>

Joanne Blum writes that 'the function of this female double [in the novels cited by Gilbert and Gubar] is to act out the anxiety and rage against gender confinement which are repressed in the central female character'.<sup>83</sup>

In the light of this observation, Marianna might perhaps be interpreted as the double of Ravera, who through her expresses her own anxiety for the women of her generation who chose the path of armed struggle and now lead a precarious life as fugitives. At the same time, however, we need to be aware that in Ravera's text, as in the others analysed in this part of the chapter, the madwoman is not an antagonist and

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<sup>81</sup> Sandra M. Gilbert and Susan Gubar, *The Madwoman in the Attic: The Woman Writer and the Nineteenth-Century Literary Imagination*, New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2000 (second edition; first edition 1979).

<sup>82</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 78.

<sup>83</sup> Joanne Blum, *Transcending Gender: The Male/Female Double in Women's Fiction*, Ann Arbor, London: UMI Research Press, 1988, p. 1.

double but the principal character, who is made to succumb by her *good double*. Marianna is not an antagonist who *opposes*; she is the protagonist who succumbs, and for this reason her defeat seems to acquire an even greater sense of failure. It seems to me, then, more plausible to read Ravera's text as reproducing a patriarchal plot model which only apparently seems to challenge the dominant gender boundaries.

'Lettera non chiusa' is a short story by Erri De Luca included in the collection *Decalogo*, for which ten contemporary writers were each commissioned to write in their own way, outside a religious frame, a story based on one of the Ten Commandments.<sup>84</sup> De Luca relates the tenth, or at least that part of it which enjoins, in the Italian translation, 'non desiderare la donna d'altri'. The story is in the form of a letter written by a woman who is serving a jail sentence for her involvement in the armed struggle. The woman who, like the other characters in the story, has no name, addresses her husband, a *pentito* who is out of prison and has asked her for a divorce so he can marry another woman. This other woman, who represents the *good double*, is the 'donna d'altri' because 'chi non ha condiviso l'odio e la compassione politica, chi non si è battuto allora, o semplicemente non c'era, è un estraneo'. She represents the new life her husband desires and those very values against which he and his wife once struggled. She now accuses him of inconsistency: 'La desideri per ottenere la roba degli altri, un salario, la casa, le ferie, il voto'.<sup>85</sup> As in *Voi grandi* we see here a triangular conflict between a man, who has decided to make his 'pubblica promessa di "mai più"', his wife and, indirectly, another woman, the good double.<sup>86</sup> In both texts the male characters have decided to change direction while their former partners remain loyal to the past, even though this may be painful, and consider the man's decision to be a denial of the

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<sup>84</sup> Erri De Luca, 'Lettera non chiusa', in Arnaldo Colasanti (ed.), *Decalogo. Dieci scrittori italiani raccontano i dieci comandamenti*, Milan: Rizzoli, 1997, pp. 159-63

<sup>85</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 160.



years of struggle. Indeed the wife in prison prefers her own situation to that of her husband, believing herself to be serving 'una vocazione e non una pena'.<sup>87</sup>

De Luca was a member of Lotta Continua and has often stated his belief that those in the movement who advocated violence shared not only moral responsibility but also, potentially, material responsibility for the political killings carried out by the left in the 1970s. It is not surprising that De Luca decided to depict someone who refuses to compromise, in order to express his own conviction that responsibility for the past cannot simply be wiped away with the sponge of apparent respectability.<sup>88</sup> That De Luca decided to make a woman the mouthpiece of this view seems to fit with De Cataldo Neuburger and Valentini's observation that there were far fewer women than men among the *pentiti*. They suggest that for women 'l'investimento cognitivo delle azioni terroristiche fosse poca cosa rispetto al più potente investimento emotivo' and argue that the latter involved specifically what they call the 'maternal-sacrificial' ('materno-sacrificale') affective code, that is to say the woman's 'capacità di autosacrificio, di rinuncia alle sue esigenze'. They see this 'maternal-sacrificial' code as explaining both why women were accepted within the armed group, where there was no room for a specifically feminine identity, and why they later refused to 'repent' once the armed struggle was over.<sup>89</sup> D'Eramo's text takes a sarcastic swipe at this interpretation too:

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<sup>86</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 159.

<sup>87</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 161

<sup>88</sup> Ovidio Bompreschi and Erri De Luca, 'Vivere con il terremoto'/'Eravamo tutti assassini potenziali', *Micromega* 2/ 96, special issue April-May 1996, pp. 229, 230. See also Chapter Four on this discussion.

<sup>89</sup> Luisella De Cataldo Neuburger and Tiziana Valentini, *Il filo di Arianna. Donne, eversione armata e pentitismo*, Padua: Cedam, 1992, pp. 18, 19. Men, on the other hand, so the authors claim, live according to a filial code, that of identification with the stronger figure. When the armed group no longer offers security because it starts to break up, when its ideals are replaced by the harsh reality of prison and when its individual members, even its leaders, begin to change, then identification switches to the stronger figure (in other words the state, or the law) which can give gratification, security and support (p. 71).

le donne scarseggiano tra i 'pentiti'. Gli uomini sì, sono pronti talvolta a collaborare con la vostra giustizia indicando nomi e rifugi di ex compagni. Le donne, forse anche per malposto mammismo represso, proteggono col silenzio i loro maschi.<sup>90</sup>

De Luca's text also picks up the motif of motherhood sacrificed by a woman who

'si è tagliata la mammella dei figli':

Ricordi che non dovevamo avere figli? Bisognava prima vedere il nostro governo nelle strade, solo allora era giusto mettere al mondo il nostro seme. Che figli fare mentre si è in guerra? Ora i figli sono appassiti nel mio ventre magro, il mondo di fuori non me li può più offrire, né me li può levare.<sup>91</sup>

The memory of the choice not to give life is accompanied by the memory of having comforted her husband after he had killed and of having felt 'pena per il nemico rovesciato a terra, sporcato, ridotto a niente. (...) per come era veloce il cambio tra la sua superbia di prima e la miseria dei rantoli'.<sup>92</sup> As in another story of De Luca's, entitled 'La prima notte', here too it is the woman who waits and welcomes the man who has murdered and is traumatized by the sight of blood. The two stories are constructed as mirror images of one another. 'La prima notte' is told from the point of view of the man, who relates 'his first night as a murderer' and being welcomed home by his unsuspecting partner, Nera, who is a buttress against his grief and fear. In 'Lettera non chiusa' the point of view and the words are those of the woman who recalls having consoled and listened to the man. In one story, the person who has killed is the narrator, in the other his character is narrated. However, the conclusions are different. At the end of 'La prima notte' Nera leaves her partner after having found 'una scatola di cartucce',

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<sup>90</sup> D'Eramo, 'Tra i pensieri di una terrorista rossa', p. 134.

whereas the wife in 'Lettera non chiusa' leaves because her husband no longer wants to use those cartridges. The parallel is evident also at the microtextual level. The man in 'La prima notte' says 'E avevo tremato come nelle ricadute della malaria'.<sup>93</sup> The woman in 'Lettera non chiusa' says: 'Non mi pento in convalescenza da febbri di malaria, non so ammettere di aver agito invano'.<sup>94</sup>

The theme of the woman's encounter with and opposition to both an ex-comrade and a female double is also present in the novel *La guerra di Nora* by Antonella Tavassi La Greca. The text starts out in the form of a diary written by Nora, a refugee in Paris who recounts her return home on receiving the news of her father's serious illness. Nora's return, like Marianna's in *Voi grandi*, prompts a self-analysis and a reassessment of her past, of her relationships with her mother, her father, who dies before she manages to see him, with her former comrade Luca and, above all, with her identical twin sister, Tosca, who represents her good double. Tosca is remembered and described as the good daughter, docile, her father's favourite, who had followed in his footsteps by studying piano and getting interested in archaeology:

Nell'ultimo periodo la malattia di papà ha stravolto la sua vita. Lei non è una che si risparmia, e non si è risparmiata neanche in quell'occasione. Ora è molto giù. Lei e papà sono sempre stati legati. Con mamma non ha niente in comune, ma con papà s'intendevano. Tosca è sempre stata la preferita perché ama la musica e suona molto bene il pianoforte. Da bambina ero gelosa di lei.<sup>95</sup>

The theme of the double introduces once again that of motherhood. Nora, who has had more than one abortion, is contrasted with Tosca, who is pregnant:

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<sup>91</sup> Erri De Luca, 'Lettera non chiusa', p.161.

<sup>92</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 162.

<sup>93</sup> Erri De Luca, 'La prima notte', in *In alto a sinistra*, Milan: Feltrinelli, 1994, p. 60.

<sup>94</sup> De Luca, 'Lettera non chiusa', p. 160.

<sup>95</sup> Antonella Tavassi La Greca, *La guerra di Nora*, Venice: Marsilio, 2003, p. 34.

Mentre io rivolto nella testa i soliti pensieri di violenza e di morte, mia sorella rincorre e afferra la vita. Come al solito mi sorpassa in volata, fa la cosa giusta mentre io ricado in quelle sbagliate. (...) È stato troppo tardi per rivedere mio padre, troppo tardi per stabilire un qualsiasi rapporto con mia madre, per vivere con Luca, per avere un figlio.<sup>96</sup>

At the end we learn that Tosca, with whom Nora has both a loving and a conflictual relationship, in reality exists only as her own internal projection, as an alter ego that she had externalized by creating an imaginary sister. In Tosca, Nora has united the person she had been as a child – the adored daughter able to play the piano like her father – with the person she has perhaps regretted not having become as an adult: a mother, a daughter able to be with her dying father and to support her mother, who is now left on her own. This double here thus has a more complex status because it is not an external character, with whom the protagonist is in conflict, but another self, onto whom she projects elements of her own past self as well as her fantasies and repressed wishes.

We discover the truth about Tosca only when Nora commits suicide. The diary ends and the narrative is taken up by Fernand, her former psychoanalyst and subsequently her lover, to whom she had given the diary. In a meeting with Nora's mother, Fernand learns that the twin sister she had always spoken about to him does not exist. As a result, Fernand's earlier interpretation of Nora's involvement with the armed struggle as a rebellion against her twin sister collapses. Nora had in fact written: 'Era stato subito chiaro che Fernand voleva dimostrarmi che avevo contratto la feroce e distruttiva malattia del terrorismo, perché gelosa da bambina della mia gemella'.<sup>97</sup>

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<sup>96</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 134, 135.

<sup>97</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 34.

Even though this plot device might be seen as a criticism of those psychoanalytic interpretations that seek to identify the roots of the choice to become a terrorist within the family (which, once again here, is bourgeois), this ending nevertheless suggests that this choice is pathological, the product of a sick mind unable to deal with reality. Unlike Marianna in *Voi grandi*, Nora considers her experience of the armed struggle to be over now but she has not repented ('Tutti si aspettano che cambi diametralmente posizione, che *mi penta*, se devo usare questa odiosa espressione')<sup>98</sup> and is not able to make a new life. However, the male character, Luca, whom she sees again when she comes back to Italy, seems, unlike Sergio in Ravera's text, to want to take up arms again. In this case too, although in a different way, no communication between the man and the woman is possible, yet they still feel in contact with their past. The representation of Nora, like that of Marianna, thus seems to be the product of the same cultural attitude found in neopositivist criminology which sees in the pairing of woman and violence an example of female deviation from woman's 'nature'. This is one of the attitudes which the narrative voice of D'Eramo's story criticizes, and against which it tries to put an alternative political explanation of women's participation in the armed struggle:

Ora, poiché vi ostinate a scartare a priori la spiegazione politica che invece noi rivendichiamo, signori giurati, ve lo dico con tutta la mia comprensione per la direzione obbligata del vostro verdetto: non avete scelta, non vi rimane che affidarvi alla spiegazione patologica. (...) Noi delinquenti politici abbiamo una patologia deformata, mostruosa, che spinge il nostro stesso razicinio al delitto (...). (...) noi abbiamo una malformazione mentale che ci induce a trasmutare ogni costruzione del nostro pensiero in atti di violenza omicida. Non a caso infatti il partito armato conta tante donne tra i suoi affiliati.<sup>99</sup>

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<sup>98</sup> *Ibid.* p. 35.

<sup>99</sup> D'Eramo, 'Tra i pensieri di una terrorista rossa', pp. 133-34.

To conclude this part of the chapter, I should like to mention briefly two other texts in which the figure of the female good double appears: *Die bleierne Zeit*, once again, and the short story 'Come voi' by Ida Farè. In the first case, the theme of the sister as good double runs through the entire film, except that the figure switches, significantly, from one sister to the other as they pass from adolescence into adulthood. The good sister, Marianne, her father's favourite during childhood, the clever girl, becomes the terrorist, while the one who had been the rebellious daughter, Juliane, is 'normalized', she is politically active but sensible and non-violent, and yet the one does not stop being the double of the other. In 'Come voi', the 'voi' addressed by the narrator are the *other* women, the *other* couples, those who lead their lives according to the rules.<sup>100</sup> In this text, however, the female narrator establishes a connection with her doubles living conventional lives who experience the same boredom, dissatisfaction and repetitive unhappiness as those who join the clandestine group. The narrative voice emphasises that what she, the woman of the armed struggle, has in common with the other women she addresses are the everyday customs which, in the need to pass unnoticed, reproduce the restrictions of typical gender roles:

Sono come voi. Uguale alla vostra è la mia casa. (...) Li seguo e li ripeto quei gesti. Uguali. Porto il caffè al mio compagno che dorme ancora nella stanza e finge di essere mio marito. Anche lui uguale ai vostri mariti finti.

I piatti della cena sono ancora nell'acquaio. Sul tavolo bottiglie, bicchieri sporchi e portacenere colmi di cicche di sigarette. La traccia della riunione della sera. La cosa segreta e diversa che segnala quanto accade nelle nostre vite (...) nessuna festa o ritrovo d'amici. Poche frasi convenzionali. Parole sussurate quotidiane e banali. Come le vostre. Sono come voi.

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<sup>100</sup> Ida Farè, 'Come voi', in *Tuttestorie*, No. 1, December 1990.

Mi vesto come una sposina smorta che ogni giorno si prende cura di un marito che non la riconosce, la scambia per un oggetto della casa. (...) mi trascino contenta.<sup>101</sup>

The protagonist of *La mia signora*, a short novel by the same author, arrives at the same bitter conclusion. Here, the narrator-protagonist reflects on the failed attempt of women who entered the armed groups to 'contestare il cielo dell'uomo, con parole loro, a volte nuove, a volte ingenuie o rabbiose'.<sup>102</sup> *Mara e le altre* also speaks of the absurd condition of women in the armed organizations, 'trattate come oggetti sessuali (...) [oppure] come uomini', and unable to understand other women because

anche se a se stesse e alle altre donne si riconosce una differenza, ad essa non vogliono attribuire un significato di impedimento, ma intendono semmai superarla velocemente (...). Alla parola differenza danno dunque spesso un significato negativo e, se lo danno positivo, allora sono ancora più contente e non vedono motivi di specificità o di interesse per soffermarsi sull'argomento.<sup>103</sup>

In 'Come voi', the distance between the two extremes dissolves and the two ways of life overlap, indicating the defeat of the women who, by having engaged in armed conflict, remain trapped in another masculine universe, not at all different from the one they wanted to question. In establishing a connection with the 'others' great emphasis is also given to common origins and upbringing;

Noi gli armati, i clandestini. Noi, i vostri figli senza volto. (...) Siamo i vostri figli, abbiamo i volti dei vostri figli (...) siamo cresciuti nelle vostre case, ci avete insegnato lingua e parola. Abbiamo respirato la polvere dei vostri giardini. Nelle vostre scuole ci avete misurato, classificato, educato uno per uno.<sup>104</sup>

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<sup>101</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 140.

<sup>102</sup> Ida Farè, *La mia signora*, Milan: Sugarco, 1986, p. 111.

<sup>103</sup> Farè and Spirito, *Mara e le altre*, pp. 10, 11.

<sup>104</sup> 'Come voi', p. 141.

In this comment, which recalls the themes analysed in Chapter Two, it is interesting to note the insistence on the face ('abbiamo i volti dei vostri figli') which seems to allude to a desire not to be considered generically as 'terrorists' or 'enemies' but as people with a history of their own, bearers of dreams and ideals. There is an obvious echo here of a rich thread in contemporary philosophy, from Rosenzweig to Lévinas to Mancini, which sees in the face the exemplification of the 'other', its presence, its difference and the limits of our power.<sup>105</sup> The face should promote an attitude of responsibility towards the other through which one may recognize both the problem of our time and its solution:

Il rispetto del volto e della grande morale che esso comporta (...) è la pace. La soppressione del volto o con l'uccisione fisica o con quella morale, che lo esanimisce subordinandolo alla legge generale, secondo cui il diritto o la politica dell'intero ritiene irrilevante la vita di ogni volto, (...) è la guerra.<sup>106</sup>

The ending of the story is initiated by a banal gesture. The narrator turns on the television and hears that the comrade with whom she lived in the *covo* has been killed. The motif of the face appears again:

Questa mattina l'ho guardato come fosse un uomo e lui come fossi una donna. Il mio marito finto. Sposato per la causa. C'è stato concesso di fingere. Nessuna notizia. I giornali della sera. Nessuna notizia. Adesso sono davvero sola da troppe ore. Adesso è l'ora del telegiornale. Troverò il suo identikit. Ho bisogno di sapere qual è stato l'ultimo vestito che gli avete messo addosso.<sup>107</sup>

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<sup>105</sup> Emmanuel Lévinas, *Totalité et infini: essai sur l'extériorité*, The Hague, Boston and London: Martinus Nijhoff, 1980, p. 194; Franz Rosenzweig, *The Star of Redemption* (trans. from the second edition of 1930 by William W. Hallo), Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1985.

<sup>106</sup> Italo Mancini, *Tornino i volti*, Genoa: Marietti, 1989, pp. 49-50.

<sup>107</sup> Farè, 'Come voi', p. 144.



The story finishes on a bitter note which prevails over the cynicism and makes reference to the state of emergency and the special laws ('È per la vostra diffamazione, il vostro indurci all'abiezione premiando fra noi i delatori')<sup>108</sup> which form the context of the works I shall examine in the next chapter.

### 3.4 Conclusion

The ways in which the female characters are delineated in the texts analysed in this chapter reveal a strong tendency to produce moralistic and conservative representations of women who became involved in the armed struggle. The texts dwell on the effects of their transgression of cultural norms, particularly those connected to woman's maternal role and her allegedly peaceful nature. These effects include living with a permanent sense of guilt and appearing always tormented and anxious. In the texts examined in the first part, prison is presented as an opportunity for the woman to 'repent' and make a new life by reassessing and reacquiring those norms she had formerly repudiated. It is in this way that the women can try to placate their torment. In the texts of the second part, the protagonists do not 'repent', their failure is total, they have no one to turn to and consequently they continue to pay for their defeat with jail or with an undiminished inner torment.

In the texts examined in both parts the reasons given for women's participation in the armed struggle are mainly biological, psychological and emotional (for instance a love affair). 'Social' reasons are limited to references to the metropolitan environment (for example, shots of the urban landscape) and allusions to the family.<sup>109</sup> The latter is

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<sup>108</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 138.

<sup>109</sup> Shots of the city were also significantly present in *Segreti segreti* and *Colpire al cuore* (see Chapter Two). Calopresti's *La seconda volta* (see above, note 18) is set in Turin, where Luisa Passerini held a

described in these texts, as in the those discussed in Chapter Two, as that which the women who choose armed struggle wish to rebel against, and it is presented mostly through the allusions the protagonists make to their families (or indeed through the lack of such allusions, which can sometimes be interpreted in the same way, as we noted in the case of Giulia in *La meglio gioventù*). The importance given to the personal biography of the woman as a key to interpreting her political participation echoes the conclusions of the research carried out by Wolf Middelдорff and Dorothea Middelдорff at the end of the 1970s on West German terrorism. Although, they wrote, no single cause could be identified, 'Criminological Research, especially in relation to political murder and terrorism, generally confirms that not political ideology but personal frustration is the main reason for such acting out'.<sup>110</sup> Writing specifically of Gudrun Ensslin (but the same applied, they claimed, to Ulrike Meinhof) they said: 'society was a symbol of her own failings, and her committing of herself to a life outside the law was a venture to overcome, not governments, not systems, but private despair'.<sup>111</sup> Margarethe von Trotta's film, which came out in the same year the Middelдорffs' research was published in English, seems to imply the same interpretation, even though in the story itself Marianne, the young terrorist, resists it, refusing to see a link between her own political choices and the more or less conscious conditioning exerted by her family. Her sister, however, tries to make her see that no one can free themselves from their own personal history.<sup>112</sup>

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seminar in the Carceri Nuove and at the Facoltà di Magistero on 'Identità femminile e violenza politica', the results of which are published in her article 'Ferite della memoria', in *Rivista di Storia Contemporanea*, No. 2, 1988, April, pp. 171-217.

<sup>110</sup> Wolf Middelдорff and Dorothea Middelдорff, 'Changing Patterns of Female Criminality in Germany', in Freda Adler (ed.), *The Incidence of Female Criminality in the Contemporary World*, New York: New York University Press, 1981, pp. 129. It is worth noting that although this is an 'international review' there is no explicit mention of Italy.

<sup>111</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 129.

<sup>112</sup> See von Trotta, *Die bleierne Zeit*, p. 174: 'Marianne: You can't describe me by our personal history. My history starts with other people. (...) | Juliane: As if our childhood weren't a reality. Besides, I don't

Italo Calvino, who was president of the judges at the Venice Biennale in 1981 when *Die bleierne Zeit* won the Golden Lion, was convinced of the need to

ricercare le ragioni individuali di una scelta così disastrosa: e io credo che sul terrorismo non si riesca a fare nessun discorso politico che stia in piedi, mentre le ragioni esistenziali, psicologiche culturali di ogni singolo personaggio sono le decisive.<sup>113</sup>

Goffredo Fofi, by contrast, deplored the film's numerous repressions,

rimozioni non secondarie (cito la più vistosa: Marianne non è mai vista nella sua attività di terrorista e non si considerano i suoi momenti *necessariamente* più rivelatori, per esempio, che so, il *gusto dell'azione*, forse anche il *gusto dell'uccidere*): non sono limiti da poco.<sup>114</sup>

The emphasis on family background as cause, however, is not limited to fictional representations but is also to be found in some of the autobiographies of former women terrorists. Barbara Balzerani's *Compagna Luna* is an autobiography in the form of a diary in which the author alternates between first and third person voices and begins with a memory of her childhood lived in the shadow of an inflexible and austere mother: 'Mi capita tra le mani una vecchia foto e, di colpo, ritrovo la bambina che sono stata'. And again: 'non una volta ho sentito le tue amorevolezze di madre (...) Paura e un vago senso di colpa, inculcati a sostegno del monito materno a indicare l'unica via di

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believe we can free ourselves from our personal history... | Marianne: I have demonstrated that one can.' ('MARIANNE: Du kannst mich nicht aus unserer persönlichen Geschichte heraus beschreiben. Meine Geschichte beginnt erst mit den anderen. (...)| JULIANE: Als sei unsere Kindheit kleine Wirklichkeit. Ich glaube außerdem nicht, daß wir uns aus unserer persönlichen Geschichte befreien können ... | MARIANNE: Ich habe es bewiesen.')

<sup>113</sup> Calvino's words are quoted on the back cover of the already cited Italian edition of the script, von Trotta, *Anni di Piombo*.

<sup>114</sup> Goffredo Fofi, *Dieci anni difficili. Capire con il cinema. Parte seconda, 1975-1985*, Firenze: La Casa Usher, 1985, p. 236.

scampo: *Stai al tuo posto. Non dare motivo a nessuno di doverti guardare una seconda volta.*' <sup>115</sup>

D'Eramo's 'Tra i pensieri di una terrorista rossa', which I have cited intermittently in the course of this chapter, is an unusual text precisely because it breaks with this whole representational tradition and tries instead to defend the full autonomy of the choices made by women who joined the armed struggle. It does this by means of a narratorial voice which violently and sarcastically disparages those theories that attribute the choice directly to the family and to personal life: 'Spiacente di deludervi, signori giurati, ma non ho avuto traumi infantili né cocenti esperienze personali. (...) Non sono stata maltrattata da bambina'.<sup>116</sup> The stereotype D'Eramo combats is that of the thoughtless, submissive woman of petty-bourgeois upbringing, a representation which strongly enhances the idea of the woman's political choice as error. When the letter-story breaks off and Savina, the protagonist, returns to reality she criticizes herself 'per essere caduta nel pietismo' and begins a critical analysis of a society which ignores the extreme left's demands and is interested only in drawing attention to their more 'spectacular' actions in order to incite public opinion against them.

As we have seen in the texts analysed in this chapter, as in those discussed in Chapter Two, the political dimension is almost completely lacking from the account of the causes of adherence to the armed struggle. Clearly, there were in reality many determinants of this choice, but the absence of political motives from these representations is nevertheless very noticeable. And yet, as Donatella della Porta has pointed out, on the basis of information she collected and elaborated from a series of interviews with former left terrorists,

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<sup>115</sup> Barbara Balzerani, *Compagna Luna*, Milan: Feltrinelli, 1998, p. 13, 14 (italics in original).

<sup>116</sup> D'Eramo, 'Tra i pensieri di una terrorista rossa', pp. 132, 133.

la decisione di aderire alle organizzazioni clandestine è, anche per le donne, una decisione basata su motivazioni politiche, adottata all'interno di percorsi di militanza nei quali diverse forme di azione collettiva sono già state sperimentate. L'attività politica era stata, nel periodo precedente l'adesione ai gruppi clandestini, estremamente importante anche per le donne, che avevano ad essa dedicato la maggior parte del loro tempo e delle loro energie.<sup>117</sup>

Whereas the first group of texts examined in Chapter Two focused on the causes of young men's choice of armed struggle and on conflict within the family, those that centre on women terrorists give precedence to the effects of the choice, and offer explanations that are more or less openly biological or psychological. They interpret the woman's support for armed struggle as a 'denaturing' of her being, which has inevitably brought her to either total or partial failure (partial, that is, when she is able subsequently to reacquire the previously rejected values). The motif of the 'pathological' personality of women terrorists is predominant. Criminality thus equates to social and cultural deviance. Lombroso would have no difficulty in recognising in Giulia, Marianna and Nora some of the key characteristics of his 'hysterical' woman. In the wake of the positivist tradition there are more recent criminologists who trace terrorism to pathology and pathology to sexual deviance.

Unfortunately, the representations of armed women in terms of a cultural 'sex role reversal' does not, as Ngaire Naffine hoped in another context, lead to the possibility of seeing 'the commonplace freshly and critically because our viewing point has altered'.<sup>118</sup> On the contrary, these representations seem to confirm the very limitations of the cultural imaginary. Despite all the challenges mounted by feminism, it seems very difficult to avoid, or to overcome, stereotyped cultural images which

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<sup>117</sup> Della Porta, 'Specificità delle donne e violenza politica', p. 125.

recreate and reproduce rigid boundary lines between genders.<sup>119</sup> It is hard, in other words, if not perhaps altogether impossible, to achieve what Griselda Pollock called ‘an alternative imagery outside existing ideological forms’.<sup>120</sup>

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<sup>118</sup> Ngaire Naffine, *Feminism and Criminology*, Cambridge: Polity, 1997, p. 121.

<sup>119</sup> Judith Lorber, *Paradoxes of Gender*, New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1994, p. 98.

<sup>120</sup> Pollock, ‘What’s wrong with “Images of Women”?’ , p. 136.

## Chapter Four

### After the *anni di piombo*: memory narratives, reconstructions and dramatized encounters

The courage to wait  
is greater than the courage to confess.  
With pain it's easier to gain the sympathy  
of others, which is not the case  
with waiting.

You are alone here. You hang a picture  
on the wall, straighten the rug, listen to footsteps pass,  
think that you are miserable but remind yourself  
in this you are not unique. Yet carefully  
you tear a letter into shreds.  
Here you are wholly on your own: judge yourself,  
if you must. But remember: this also  
is not what matters.

(Natan Zach, 'Greater Courage', from the collection *All the Milk and the Honey*, 1966, in *The Static Element: Selected Poems of Natan Zach*, trans. by Peter Everwine and Shulamit Yasny-Starkman, New York: Atheneum, 1982, p. 36)

#### 4.1 Introduction

From the end of 1979 onwards, encouraged by the so-called 'emergency laws', many who had joined the 'armed struggle' decided to 'dissociate' (*dissociarsi*) or 'repent' (*pentirsi*).<sup>1</sup> Others were arrested, tried under the emergency procedures and imprisoned.

<sup>1</sup> Decree law no. 625 of 15 December 1979, later converted into the so-called 'legge Cossiga' (Law no. 15 of 6 February 1980), empowered the police to arrest on suspicion and hold the suspect for up to 72 hours for 'cospirazione politica mediante associazione' and 'associazione per delinquere'. The 'law on pentiti' (no. 304, 29 May 1982) conceded reduced sentences for 'pentiti'. On these two laws see Gabriele Chelazzi, *La dissociazione dal terrorismo*, Rome: Giuffrè, 1981; Valerio Evangelisti, 'Qu'est-ce qu' "un repentini"?', in Fred Vargas, *La Vérité sur Cesare Battisti*, Paris: Viviane Hamy, pp. 87-90. See also the

Others still managed to flee abroad, mostly to Switzerland, Latin America and later to France.<sup>2</sup>

This chapter examines a group of works which are different in kind – they include narrative texts, theatre pieces, films, oral reflections, fiction, semi-fiction – but which have in common the fact that they were all produced within the same period, namely the last ten years, they all look back at the violence of the 1970s, and they contain certain recurrent themes, such as the need to come to terms with the past, the attempts by ex-militants to rebuild their lives, the conflict between ex-comrades ('pentiti' or otherwise), and between the old and new generations. Taken as a whole, these works confirm the impossibility of a 'group autobiography', that is to say a collective account shared by the different protagonists of these years. Such an account is made impossible by the very different ways in which individuals confront and present the past.

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article by Girolamo De Michele, 'Tre passi nel delirio (dei delitti e delle pene)', in Valerio Evangelisti, Giuseppe Genna, Wu Ming 1 et al. (eds), *Il caso Battisti. L'emergenza infinita e i fantasmi del passato*, Milan: Nda Press, 2004, pp. 47, which stresses how the law on *pentiti* marked a profound change in legal procedures because it replaced the 'rite of accusation', where it was necessary to provide evidence in support of one's accusations, with a 'rite of inquisition', where the words of the witness, supergrass or *pentito* became the proof, even when the witness was not present in the courtroom. As a result it was no longer the state that had to demonstrate the guilt of the accused but the latter who had to defend himself or herself against accusations. On the 'law on *pentiti*' of 29 May 1982 see also Maurizio Laudì, *I casi di non punibilità dei terroristi 'pentiti', III serie: La legislazione dell'emergenza*, Rome: Giuffrè, 1983 and *Terroristi 'pentiti' e la liberazione condizionale*, Rome: Giuffrè, 1984; Guido Salvini, *La legge sui terroristi pentiti. Un primo bilancio*, Milan: Edizioni Unicopli, 1983. On the state's attitude see Robert E. Evans, 'Terrorism and Subversion of the State: Italian Legal Responses', *Terrorism and Political Violence*, Vol. 1, July 1989, Number 3, pp. 324-53, and Laura Grimaldi, *Processo all'istruttoria. Storia di una inquisizione politica*, Milan: Milan Libri, 1981. It is worth recalling that before this emergency legislation there had already been a number of laws and decrees restricting individual freedom. Among the most significant were Decree law no. 99 of 11 April 1974, which increased the maximum period of imprisonment without trial to eight years, Law no. 497 of 14 October 1974, which reintroduced police interrogation of suspects, and the 'legge Reale' (Law no. 152, 22 May 1975), which allowed stop searches without a magistrate's authorization. A decree of 4 May 1977 had introduced 'special prisons'. The 'Moro decree' of 21 March 1978, among other clauses, authorized the police to arrest and hold on suspicion for twenty-four hours for the purpose of identification and removed the limit on length of tapping of telephone calls. On 30 August 1978 the government passed a decree which gave General Carlo Alberto Dalla Chiesa of the carabinieri special powers in the fight against terrorism.

<sup>2</sup> Donatella della Porta, *Il terrorismo di sinistra*, Bologna: Il Mulino, 1990, p. 257-83; Raimondo Catanzaro, *La politica della violenza*, Bologna: Il Mulino, 1990.



Several of the works examined here, particularly the documentary films, are little known and have had only a limited, ‘amateur’ distribution. My reasons for focusing here on these particular representations, apart from the fact that they have not been explored before as a group, is that they are retrospective accounts, memory narratives and self-narratives of former militants, produced from an ‘external’ standpoint in a spatial sense, from the position of exile in France. This makes them particularly unusual and interesting.<sup>3</sup>

It is important to stress that the ‘group of exiles’ is in fact politically somewhat heterogeneous. As Daniele Biacchessi has pointed out, of the

163 militanti della lotta armata ricercati all'estero, buona parte proviene dalle BR e dalle varie sigle successive ad esse collegate, nate dalla divisione del 1981. Altri fanno riferimento a gruppi, collettivi e comitatati di Aut Op e del cosiddetto “terrorismo diffuso” degli anni Settanta.<sup>4</sup>

He specifies:

i fuoriusciti italiani a Parigi provengono da esperienze diverse che si coagulano tra il 1973 e il 1980 attraverso quattro percorsi organizzativi. Il primo porta alcuni militanti di Potere Operaio a fondare Autonomia Operaia e i Comitati Comunisti Rivoluzionari. Il secondo cammino conduce altri membri di Potere

<sup>3</sup> There are, of course, a large number of interesting memoirs of former left militants and terrorists which do not contain this double distance from the past, this looking *back* from *outside*. They include Enrico Fenzi, *Armi e bagagli: un diario delle B.R.*, Genoa: Costa & Nolan, 1987; Gianni Cocconi, *Champagne Molotov*, Milan: Editrice Italia Letteraria, 1987; Barbara Balzerani, *Compagna luna* (already cited) and *La sirena delle cinque*, Milan: Jaca Book, 2003; Alberto Franceschini, *Mara, Renato e io. Storia delle Brigate Rosse*, Milan: Mondadori, 1988; Mario Capanna, *Formidabili quegli anni*, Milan: Rizzoli, 1988; Renato Curcio, *A viso aperto: vita e memorie del fondatore delle BR*, Milan: Mondadori, 1993; Renato Curcio, *La soglia*, Rome: Coop. Sensibili alle foglie, 1993; Valerio Morucci, *Ritratto di un terrorista da giovane*, Casale Monferrato: Piemme, 1999 and *La peggio gioventù*, Milan: Rizzoli, 2003; Mario Moretti, *Brigate Rosse: una storia italiana*, Milan: Anabasi, 1994; Silvana Mazzocchi, *Nell'anno della tigre. Storia di Adriana Faranda*, Milan: Baldini e Castoldi, 1994; Prospero Gallinari, *Dall'altra parte: l'odissea quotidiana delle donne dei detenuti politici*, Milan: Feltrinelli, 1995; Alberto Franceschini and Anna Samueli, *La borsa del Presidente. Ritorno agli anni di piombo*, Rome: Ediesse, 1997; Vincenzo Guagliardo, *Di sconfitta in sconfitta*, Milan: Colibri, 2002; Giovanni Bianconi, *Mi dichiaro prigioniero politico. Storie delle Brigate rosse*, Turin: Einaudi, 2003; Giovanni Fasanella and Alberto Franceschini, *Che cosa sono le BR*, Milan: BUR, 2004; Sergio Segio, *Miccia corta. Una storia di Prima linea*, Rome: DeriveApprodi 2005, AldoGrandi, *Insurrezione armata*, Milan: Rizzoli, 2005.

<sup>4</sup> Daniele Biacchessi, *Vie di fuga. Storie di clandestini e militanti*, Milan: Mursia, 2004, p. 34.

Operaio verso collettivi di quartiere, formazioni armate, fino al reclutamento nelle Brigate Rosse. La terza strada è quella imboccata da quanti, usciti da Lotta Continua, si ritrovano negli anni successivi intorno alle tesi ideologiche delle riviste “Senza Tregua” e “Rosso”, fino alla costituzione di Prima Linea, Proletari Armati per il Comunismo, Formazioni Comuniste Combattenti e RCA, Reparti Comunisti di Attacco. La quarta e ultima via è autonoma e indipendente dalla militanza in gruppi della sinistra extraparlamentare: passa dalla trasformazione di collettivi di quartiere in movimenti armati come MCR [Movimento Comunista Rivoluzionario], UCC [Unione dei Comunisti Combattenti] e altre sigle ancora. Esistono naturalmente percorsi individuali non ancora del tutto esplorati.<sup>5</sup>

Of the exiles who are the subject of the documentaries I shall discuss here Oreste Scalzone was the Rome leader of Potere Operaio, to which Luigi Rosati also belonged before joining the MCR; Cesare Battisti was in Proletari Armati per il Comunismo (PAC), as was Roberto Silvi; Gianfranco Pacino was active in the Milan periodical *Rosso* produced by the Brigade Comuniste; Andrea Morelli was one of the founders of COCORI (Comitati Comunisti Rivoluzionari). Morelli e Scalzone are now the principal contacts for the association of Italian refugees in Paris, *XXI secolo*.<sup>6</sup>

In the following part of this chapter, ‘Stories and memories of the refugees’, after making some general observations, I shall examine the narratives of these exiles as they appear in the few documentary films that have been made about them: *Vite sospese* (1996) by Marco Turco, *Addio Lugano bella* (2000) by Francesca Solari, *Résistances* (2002) by Pierre-André Sauvageut, *Ciao ‘Bella Ciao’* (2002) by Jorge Amat, *A mezza*

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<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 58

<sup>6</sup> Oreste Scalzone was sentenced, at the end of the ‘April 7th’ trial, after five years of *carcerazione preventiva*, to twenty years for ‘associazione sovversiva e banda armata’. In 1987 this sentence was reduced to nine years and eight months; in 1998 he obtained a residence permit in France. Luigi Rosati was also accused of ‘associazione sovversiva e banda armata’ and sentenced to six years for the actions of the Formazioni Comuniste Armate. Gianfranco Pacino was sentenced to 24 years by the Court of Assizes in Milan; this was then changed to 25 years and 6 months by the Tribunal of Rome. Morelli was sentenced to 4 years (Biacchesi, *Vie di Fuga*, pp. 62, 66, 67, 70). Paola De Luca was sentenced to ten years for ‘costituzione di banda armata’. In 1998 she also obtained a French residence permit (*A mezza altezza*). The situations of Battisti and Roberto Silvi will be explained later in this chapter (see 4.2).

*altezza* (2000) and *Sola andata per Parigi* (2004) by Menotti Bucco.<sup>7</sup> In all these films the exile is interviewed and produces a 'self narrative' (for a definition of this term see below, 2.1) but he or she is not the author of the film. In narratological terms, the exile is therefore strictly speaking the *object* of the narration and not its *subject*. It is the director and editor of the film who organize and, therefore, manipulate the exile's self-narrative, first by positioning and framing him or her in front of the camera and then, in post-production, by selecting extracts from the interview, cutting, joining them together, adding music, separating sound from image by using voiceovers, and so on. These texts may therefore be defined as 'framed' or 'embedded' self-narratives, where the 'frame' is constituted by these prior and subsequent directorial interventions which 'contain' within a filmic narrative the live narrative originally produced in front of the camera by the exile.

In the same part of the chapter I shall also look at the fiction film *Vite in sospenso* (1998), which Marco Turco went on to make after his similarly titled documentary, and at some of the novels written by Cesare Battisti. These works are presented as examples of *indirect* self-narratives, i.e. texts in which the autobiographical elements are elaborated in the form of a fiction or semi-fiction (for example, the facts are modified and attributed to invented characters, places and dates are changed) and thus the boundaries between fact and fiction are blurred. These texts may also be considered as examples of 'autofictions', although in the case of Battisti's novels the protagonist who stands for him does not always have his name, as is usually the case in an autofictional narrative.<sup>8</sup> These indirect self-narratives can be distinguished by their

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<sup>7</sup> These films (with the exception of *Résistances*, which I bought from the website dedicated to Battisti, <http://www.vialibre5.com>) were all sent to me, free of charge, by the directors after I had contacted them and explained my project. I should like to thank them here.

<sup>8</sup> See Frank Zippel, 'Autofiction', in David Herman, Manfred Jahn and Marie-Laure Ryan (eds), *The Routledge Encyclopedia of Narrative Theory*, London and New York: Routledge, 2005, pp. 36-7.

hybrid factual/fictional form both from *embedded* self-narratives and from *direct* self-narratives. The latter are the autobiographies written by the exiles. I have decided not to include these in my analysis, both because I needed to limit my field for reasons of space and because they are relatively better known than the indirect or embedded self-narratives.<sup>9</sup> Although the indirect self-narratives cannot be considered completely reliable as sources of information on the life of the refugees, they are often very reliable indicators of the image they have of themselves, in other words of how they perceive themselves and how they want to be perceived. In the words of Mark Freeman:

While it is unquestionably true that autobiographical texts do not and cannot reveal the past ‘as it was’, and while it is also true that some people may indeed weave fictions about themselves that clearly deserve the name of ‘illusions’, my own perspective on these issues is that these texts, far from *necessarily* falling prey to illusion, may in fact be quite real and (dare I say) true.<sup>10</sup>

One of the aims of this chapter, as of the thesis as a whole, is to draw attention to these contaminations and crossovers between fact and fiction.

In the subsequent part of the chapter, ‘Fictions: meetings of past and present’, I shall explore the depiction of the aftermath of the *anni di piombo* in three fictional works by people who were not themselves directly active in the political militancy of the 1970s – Girolamo De Michele’s novel *Tre uomini paradossali* (2004), Antonio Tabucchi’s short story ‘Piccoli equivoci senza importanza’ (1985) and Rosalia Polizzi’s film *Riconciliati* (2001) – and in two theatrical works: Roberto Silvi and Cecilia Calvi’s

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<sup>9</sup> I also decided not to take into consideration the self-narratives produced by Toni Negri and Paolo Persichetti because they are no longer exiles. Negri returned voluntarily from France to Italy to serve the rest of his sentence, hoping to raise awareness of the need to deal with the problem of the exiles in Paris. He was then released from prison in 2003, having served his full sentence of 17 years. Persichetti was extradited in August 2002 and is now in prison in Viterbo.

<sup>10</sup> Mark Freeman, *Rewriting the Self: History, Memory, Narrative*, London and New York: Routledge, 1993, p. 31.

*Le ragioni dell'altro* (2004) and Marco Trigona Occhipinti's *Segue comunicato* (1998).

In this part of the chapter, the characteristic common to the texts is their representation of the post-*anni di piombo* period in the form of a 'dramatic encounter'. In the three fictional works this takes the form of an *intragenerational* encounter between ex-comrades or friends who had been, at one time, members of the same political group and had then gone their separate ways as a result of the decision of one of them to join the armed struggle. In the two theatrical works the encounters are *intergenerational*: between a younger and an older self in the first case and a mother and son in the second. I decided to include *Le ragioni dell'altro* alongside these fictional works because although Silvi and Calvi's play – which started out as a project between Silvi and Battisti for a double biography which was never completed – is strongly autobiographical and might thus come under the category of indirect self-narratives, it is really constructed around a dramatic encounter.

## 4.2 Stories and memories of the refugees

### General reflections

Before proceeding to the analysis of the texts I want to set out some theoretical premises derived from narrative studies, concentrating in particular on the 'self-narrative', a sub-category of the life narrative in which the subject recounts his or her own life story. Telling a self-narrative means setting in motion a process of *rewriting the self*, in which one's past experience is not simply recorded and reproduced but shaped and

reinterpreted in the act of remembering.<sup>11</sup> A self-narrative is a construction which is useful as a vehicle 'for understanding the unique trajectories of individuals' lives'.<sup>12</sup> This does not mean that past experience and the reconstruction of that experience are separate realms; on the contrary, I believe in their reciprocal interplay and influence. As the psychologist Kenneth J. Gergen maintains:

Selves are pre-eminently textual constructions, with autobiography forming a literary genre. Thus (...) the very idea of an autobiography (a story of the self) is a cultural by-product. To put it squarely, self-remembrance is achieved by the skilled use of narrative figuration, a rhetoric of an objective past, and the judicious use of the first person as the subject or the object of the various sentences making up the text.<sup>13</sup>

On the other hand, this does not mean that there is no difference between real life and narrative. But it is important to recall that, as Peter Brooks puts it,

narrative is one of the ways in which we speak, one of the large categories in which we think. Plot is its thread of design and its active shaping force, the product of our refusal to allow temporality to be meaningless, our stubborn insistence on making meaning in the world and in our lives.<sup>14</sup>

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<sup>11</sup> Mark Freeman 'Life Narratives, the Poetics of Selfhood, and the Redefinition of Psychological Theory', in Wolfgang Maiers, Betty Baier, Barbara Duarte Esgalhado, René Jorna and Ernst Schraube (eds), *Challenges to Theoretical Psychology*, Concord, Ontario: Captus Press (International Society for Theoretical Psychology, Biennial Conference, Berlin, 7 April 1997), 1999, p. 248: 'the process of interpretive reading is at one and the same time a process of "writing": of giving new form, of poetically refashioning the self, in the very process of telling its story'.

<sup>12</sup> Mark Freeman, 'Data are Everywhere: Narrative Criticism in the Literature of Experience', in Colette Daiute and Cynthia Lightfoot (eds), *Narrative Analysis. Studying the Development of Individuals in Society*, London: Sage, 2004, p. 69.

<sup>13</sup> Kenneth J. Gergen, 'Mind, Text and Society: Self memory in Social Context', in Ulric Neisser and Robyn Fivush (eds), *The Remembering Self: Construction and Accuracy in the Self-Narrative*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994, p. 80.

<sup>14</sup> Peter Brooks, *Reading for the Plot*, p. 323.

This approach has allowed me to analyse the accounts of the Italian exiles in France as self-narrative texts, in an attempt to identify their motifs, stereotypes and recurrent themes. It is important to keep in mind that it is not possible to grasp the reality of the 'way we are' and the 'way we were' outside of these self-narratives. They are reconstructions of the identity of the self, representations and, therefore, inevitably reinterpretations, because 'perception is already selective and interpretative in its activity'.<sup>15</sup>

At this point, one inevitably asks which 'self' the Italian exiles in Paris are constructing with their self-narratives. The scheme proposed by Gergen constitutes a useful instrument with which to try and answer this. He maintains that there are 'five rules for remembering the self' that are used to construct an intelligible self-narrative. The first is the presence of a 'valued endpoint', that is a 'position', a point to aim towards, which has an 'established value within the culture'.<sup>16</sup> The second is the 'selection of related events', that is the choice of those events which will confirm the pre-selected 'valued endpoint'. The third is the 'temporal ordering of events' and the fourth is the connection between events, by means of 'causal linkages'.<sup>17</sup> The fifth rule is the presence of demarcation signs, namely signals that are 'used to indicate when various accounts figure as reports on self-memory', for example, when one says 'I remember that ...because', or to mark the beginning or end of a recollection, since 'Proper remembrance must be demarcated in some way, set off as "memories of the self"'.<sup>18</sup>

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<sup>15</sup> Paul Ricoeur, 'Can Fiction Be True?', *Analecta Husserliana, The Yearbook of Phenomenological Research*, Vol. XIV (The Jubilee Volume 1968-1978), 1983, p. 9. This concept constitutes the basis for the study of self-narratives: see Freeman, *Rewriting the Self*, p.33.

<sup>16</sup> Gergen, 'Mind, Text and Society', pp. 91, 93.

<sup>17</sup> Kenneth J. Gergen, *Realities and Relationships: Soundings in Social Construction*, Cambridge, MA and London: Harvard University Press, 1997, pp. 190, 191; Gergen, 'Mind, Text and Society', p. 93.

<sup>18</sup> Gergen, 'Mind, Text and Society', p. 93.

In the case of the political refugees, the ‘valued endpoint’ most often seems to be reached by what I would call a self-narrative of *normalization*, i.e. by the desire to show that one has changed, that one now has a new life, no longer as active political militant but as a ‘normal’ person, and also a victim of circumstances. Vincenzo Ruggiero’s description of their experience as that of being ‘sentenced to normality’, merges both these aspects of their self-narratives.<sup>19</sup>

A fundamental characteristic in the documentary films examined here is the oral nature of the embedded self-narratives they contain. Luisa Passerini maintains that ‘L’oralità stabilisce un tono narrativo in cui il soggetto proietta la sua immagine su un presente assoluto, anziché considerare il sé attuale come risultato di cambiamenti e travagli’ and that ‘l’identità senza sviluppo dev’essere assunta come una delle specifiche modalità della narrazione orale’.<sup>20</sup> She claims that orality gives form to ‘rappresentazioni autobiografiche assai diverse da quelle dell’autobiografia scritta legata al romanzo di formazione e alla scoperta di un’interiorità in divenire’.<sup>21</sup> I would make two points about this. First, although it is undeniable that oral and written self-narratives are different in the way they are both produced and used, a clear division between them does not seem always appropriate. In the case of Battisti, for example, it is possible to find similar themes and a similar tone in his self-narratives in the documentaries and in his novels. Second, the tendency to concentrate on an ‘absolute present’, which Passerini considers characteristic of oral narratives, is only detectable in part in the self-narratives of the exiles. They certainly emphasise their present but they do so with

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<sup>19</sup> Vincenzo Ruggiero, ‘Sentenced to Normality: The Italian political refugees in Paris’, *Crime, Law and Social Change*, Vol. 19, 1993, p. 34; republished in Italian as ‘Condannati alla normalità. I rifugiati politici italiani in Francia’, in Primo Moroni, IG Rote Fabrik, Konzeptbüro (eds), *Le parole e la lotta armata. Storia vissuta e sinistra militante in Italia, Germania e Svizzera*, Milan: Shake, 1999, pp. 135-56; also republished in Evangelisti et al., *Il caso Battisti*, pp. 114-36.

<sup>20</sup> Luisa Passerini, *Torino operaia e fascismo. Una storia orale*, Rome-Bari: Laterza, 1984, pp. 16, 70.

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 4.



reference to their past, giving prominence to what they have *become* with respect to what they *were*. In this way, they present themselves as having ‘developed identities’, though, often, only the external results of this development are seen and not the inner process.

The events remembered by the exiles in order to validate their self-narratives are in fact taken from the past as well as from their present situation. They speak of the 1970s; some of them talk of their involvement in the armed struggle, their escape from Italy, life in exile, their new family and their nostalgia for their family of origin. The ‘causal linkages’ that bind events to create a normalized and developed self-narrative appear to be the result of *external* factors – the emergency laws that prompted them to flee, the words of President Mitterrand that drew them to France. With a few exceptions (for example in the self-narratives of Paola De Luca and Luigi Rosati), there is no description of causal linkages deriving from *inner* reflection. These are *change and development narratives* with the respect to the past, even though the inner reasons for the life changes are not made clear. Indeed the choice of armed conflict itself is often recalled as if it were the outcome of a sort of predestination resulting from the social and cultural ‘context’ of the 1970s. One could even conclude that, in order to validate their *normalizing* self-narratives, they have decided, more or less consciously, not to labour the significance of ‘how they were’ or dwell on episodes in their lives linked to the choice of armed struggle. They do not seem to realize that, in this way, they risk constructing a simplified version of their experiences.

In addition to the ‘selection of events’, the definitions they give of themselves also aim to reinforce their self-narratives, and these are very different from the definitions of them produced by the public and hegemonic discourse of television and the press. On this subject Cesare Battisti says:

comment ma seule voix d'homme peut-elle affronter tous les cris qui ont déjà déferlé contre moi? (...) 'criminel odieux', 'assassin', 'tueur'... Cet homme qui n'est pas moi porte mon nom dans le journaux, partout. Cet homme, ce meurtrier, je ne le connais pas.<sup>22</sup>

They define themselves as the 'vanquished', the 'defeated' of a civil 'war', of a revolution of which they consider themselves to be 'veterans' who have long endured 'l'insulto della denigrazione e della criminalizzazione'.<sup>23</sup> From their self-narratives emerges a strong identity as *victims* of exile. This has been well described by Bauman in another context:

To be in exile means to be out of place; also, needing to be rather elsewhere, not having that 'elsewhere' where one would rather be. Thus, exile is a place of compulsory confinement, but also an unreal place, a place that is itself out of place in the order of things. Anything may happen here, but nothing can be done here. In exile uncertainty meets freedom. Creation is the issue of the wedlock.<sup>24</sup>

Although theirs is a voluntary exile, the injustice of the situation which has forced them to flee from Italy emerges from their self-narratives. They often highlight the painfully precarious aspect of their life in Paris, unlike the descriptions of them in the newspapers which, as Battisti says, speak of an 'esilio dorato'. The Italian government continues to press for their extradition, despite the protection they were allegedly given under the so-called 'Mitterrand Doctrine', the result of Mitterrand's declaration of 20th April 1985 at the 65th Congress of the Ligue de Droits de l'Homme:

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<sup>22</sup> Cesare Battisti, 'Lettre ouverte aux Italiens et aux Français. Inexplicable cauchemar', in Vargas, *La Vérité sur Cesare Battisti*, p. 178.

<sup>23</sup> Paolo Persichetti and Oreste Scalzone, *Il nemico inconfessabile*, p. 3.

<sup>24</sup> Zygmunt Bauman, 'Assimilation into Exile: The Jew as a Polish Writer', in Susan Rubin Suleiman (ed.), *Exile and Creativity*, Durham and London: Duke University Press, 1998, p. 321.

Prenons le cas des Italiens. Sur quelques trois cents Italiens qui ont participé à l'action terroriste en Italie depuis de longues années, avant 1981, plus d'une centaine sont venus en France, ont rompu avec la machine infernale dans laquelle ils s'étaient engagés, le proclament, ont abordé une deuxième phase de leur propre vie, se sont insérés dans la société française, souvent s'y sont mariés, ont fondé une famille, trouvé un métier. Bien entendu, s'il était démontré que tel ou tel d'entre eux manquait à ses engagements, nous trompait tout simplement, nous frapperions, mais j'ai dit au gouvernement italien, de même lorsque est venu M. Craxi récemment à Paris, dans une conférence de presse, j'ai dit que ces trois cents Italiens – c'est naturellement un chiffre tout à fait global qui ne m'engage aucunement, mais cela veut bien dire – étaient à l'abri de toute sanction par voie d'extradition, et que celles et ceux d'entre eux qui poursuivaient les méthodes que nous condamnons, que nous n'acceptons pas, que nous réprimerons, eh bien, nous le saurons, et le sachant, nous extradons. Dire cela dans un Congrès de la Ligue des Droits de l'Homme, c'est ne pas le plus facile. Je le dis presque à voix basse, je serai, pour ma part, intransigeant, je dirai, implacable, à l'égard de toute forme de terrorisme.<sup>25</sup>

The French President thus gave his word that the Italians in France would not be extradited, provided that they renounced armed struggle and became integrated into French society. As Michel Tubiana, President of the Ligue des Droits de l'Homme, pointed out in a letter, a promise given in public has no legal power or validity, but it is an *undertaking* that was honoured both by Mitterrand and, after 1995, by his successor, Chirac, until it became the object of renewed debate in 2004. According to Robert Badinter, who was Minister of Justice under Mitterrand:

Ce que l'on appelle la Doctrine Mitterrand peut être discutée, repoussée ou approuvée, mais elle reste la décision d'un Président de la République, du plus haut représentant de l'État, qui engage donc l'État lui-même y compris sur le plan politique. Je ne vois pas pourquoi reconsidérer, vingt ans après, un engagement de l'État français par rapport à un contexte historique et à des positions qui n'ont pas changé aujourd'hui. La parole donnée, la parole du chef de l'État, doit compter, même si quiconque est libre de penser que cette décision était erronée. Il n'est pas acceptable, par exemple, que le président américain Bush contredise les décisions du président Clinton sur la Cour pénale internationale.<sup>26</sup>

<sup>25</sup> Vargas, *La Vérité sur Cesare Battisti*, pp. 160-1.

<sup>26</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 170.

Because of the nature of the 'Mitterrand Doctrine' and the way in which the Italian judiciary has handled the situation, the position of the Italian refugees in France represents

a juridical anomaly. They were never granted political asylum and yet they are conditionally tolerated. They were not extradited, and yet their interlocutor is an abstract authority which can act at will, while exerting a permanent blackmail on them. They are tangled in a bureaucratic apparatus, whose logic and decision making procedures they do not know. The model of justice that they face is a 'charismatic' one (...). Law appears to them as retaining those magic tones that Max Weber attributed to archaic justice models.<sup>27</sup>

The absence of a well-defined figure against whom they can struggle has the result of depriving the subjects of their 'political identity'.<sup>28</sup>

Giorgio Agamben has made the interesting suggestion, in another context, that exile can be considered 'né un diritto né una pena, né fuori né dentro l'ordinamento giuridico' but rather a *refuge*, and thus as existing in a realm 'above politics' by which the very nature of political identity is defined:

Che la condizione dell'*apolis*, di colui che è sciolto da ogni comunità politica, apparisse ai greci particolarmente inquietante (e, proprio per questo, insieme subumana e sovrumana), è attestato, tra l'altro, dal celebre passo del coro dell'*Antigone* in cui Sofocle caratterizza l'essenza del *deinòs*, del minaccioso che appartiene all'uomo, attraverso l'ossimoro *ypsipolis apolis* (letteralmente: «superpolitico-apolitico»). Memore di questo *deinòs*, Aristotele, all'inizio della *Politica*, afferma per parte sua che «colui che è apolide per natura e non per ventura, è o inferiore all'umano o più forte di esso» e, con un'immagine pragmatica, paragona il senza città a una «pedina scompagnata (*azyx*) nel gioco degli scacchi» (1253 a 4-8). Nella tradizione della filosofia greca, l'apolide e l'esiliato non erano dunque figure neutrali, e solo se la si restituisce a questo originario contesto politico, l'espressione plotiniana acquista tutto il suo senso (...). Definendo la condizione umana suprema come *phygé*, la filosofia non sta affermando la propria impoliticità, ma, al contrario, essa rivendica paradossalmente l'esilio come la condizione politica più autentica. Con un ardito

<sup>27</sup> Ruggiero, 'Sentenced to Normality: The Italian political refugees in Paris', p. 39.

<sup>28</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 40.

rovesciamento, la vera essenza politica dell'uomo non consiste più nella semplice iscrizione in una comunità data, ma coincide piuttosto con quell'elemento inquietante che Sofocle aveva definito «superpolitico-apolide». In questa prospettiva, l'esilio cessa di apparire come una figura politica marginale, per affermarsi come un paradigma filosofico-politico fondamentale, forse il solo che, rompendo la fitta trama della tradizione politica ancor oggi dominante, potrebbe permettere di pensare da capo la politica dell'Occidente.<sup>29</sup>

In other words, exile, the condition of not belonging to a particular political community – which is the condition of the Italian refugees in Paris – and of lacking the political rights enjoyed by those who are part of the *polis*, becomes, according to this analysis, the most authentic political condition. Through it one passes from 'exile from politics' to a 'politics of exile'. In another text, Agamben has looked at the state of exception which many exiles consider to be the cause of their unjust condemnation. He has stressed how the normative aspect of the law may be counteracted by violence carried out by a government, in conflict with international law. The result is a permanent state of exception which pretends to apply the law.<sup>30</sup> This state of exception in Italy, and the 'control society' which goes along with it, is also the subject of a text by the Luther Blisset Project.<sup>31</sup>

### **The first *normalizing narratives* and their fictionalization**

Marco Turco shot the documentary *Vite sospese* for the RAI in 1996, deciding to give a voice and visibility to four exiles in Paris: Pino Nitrani, Andrea Morelli, Domenico De Feo and Livia Sheller. In the film they relate their experiences in alternation with each other. Their self-narratives are arranged in three main chapters which divide them into

<sup>29</sup> Giorgio Agamben, 'Politica dell'esilio', in *Rivista di DeriveApprodi*, Vol. VII, No. 16, Summer 1998 (special issue on 'L'esilio, il corpo della biopolitica'), pp. 25-27.

<sup>30</sup> Giorgio Agamben, *State of Exception*, Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2005.

<sup>31</sup> Luther Blisset Project, *Nemici dello Stato. Criminali, 'mostri' e leggi speciali nella società di controllo*, Rome: DeriveApprodi, 1999.

successive chronological slices: *La fuga*, *L'arrivo a Parigi*, *L'esilio*. One can identify here that 'selection of events' which make up a normalized narrative of development from 'perpetrator' to 'victim'.

With the prevailing tone of an action film, the story of the escape from Italy introduces that of life in a foreign land, up to the arrival in Paris. Pino Nitrani tells how he crossed the border through a hole in the wire fence with forty other people. Andrea Morelli says how he took advantage of a temporary period out of jail for health reasons to jump parole and escape. Livia Sheller tells how she lived first in New York, then in a village in Switzerland, with her one-year-old son Morgan. Domenico De Feo speaks of his life in Mexico. Their arrival in Paris, after they had heard about Mitterrand's promise, is described ambivalently. On the one hand they represent it positively, because they felt it to be the only possible alternative to jail, a hope for a new life (the average age of this group of exiles was then less than thirty), and because of the solidarity shown by the comrades who had arrived before them. On the other hand, their narratives express the pain of separation from their families of origin with whom, as young revolutionaries, they had wanted to break every tie. In the past they were represented by the media and various sociologists as symbolic parricides. Now they are suffering because they cannot be near their ageing parents when the latter become ill and die. In this way they manage to show how they now appreciate precisely those values and ties which they repudiated in the name of the armed struggle.

The formerly errant son now wants to return home but he cannot because to go back to Italy will mean going to jail. The generational conflict is no longer between them and their own parents but now emerges at two other levels: on the first it is between them, now mothers and fathers, and their own children, to whom they have to

explain what they did in the past; on the second, imaginary level, it is between their present selves and their own younger selves in the past.

Livia Sheller relates how she tried to explain to her son why it was not possible for them to return to Italy:

non ho mai accompagnato mio figlio in Italia e penso che è a partire da questo dato qui che mi sono sentita di dovergli spiegare, gli ho detto che ero stata condannata per delle azioni in cui mi sono trovata con delle armi.

Her son then remarks:

siccome era più giovane non sapeva tanto quello che faceva (...). Sono con mia madre, la seguo, ma mi farebbe piacere andare in Italia e vederla felice a rivedere l'Italia.

At the time of the documentary Domenico De Feo had recently had the chance to see his son again after seven years. When the boy was two, De Feo's partner had taken him back with her to her native Mexico. When he sees his son again he feels the need to explain to him why he is unable to visit him but can only speak to him on the telephone:

Mio figlio non sapeva di essere italiano e gli ho spiegato che io e gli altri avevamo tentato di cambiare le cose e avevamo creato un movimento politico, eravamo costretti ad abbandonare il paese e che queste cose succedono a chi vuol fare il rivoluzionario e il sovversivo e per questa ragione il suo papà non poteva andarlo a trovare.

Pino Nitrani tells how he has not yet said anything to his little girl, Charline, whom he and his wife Nathalie have adopted, but knows that he will have to speak to her:

Ho con lei un rapporto stupendo, ma ha solo cinque anni non le ho raccontato ancora niente, le ho solo detto che ho delle difficoltà a tornare in Italia (...). Se Charline non ci fosse più la mia vita non avrebbe senso, ma queste sono banalità che dicono tutti i padri.

Are the self-narratives recounted in these documentaries perhaps really destined for the exiles' children? Turco tried to give a possible answer to this question, and to account for the need to provide an explanation to those who come after, in his subsequent fiction film, *Vite in sospeso*. Dario (Ennio Fantastichini) has been an exile in Paris for about ten years. His younger half-brother, Jacopo (Massimo Bellinzoni), decides to interview the Italian refugees in Paris, in order to try to understand his brother's experience:

Cosa mi viene in tasca? Ma lo sai quante volte ho visto mio fratello io in vita mia? Tre, quattro volte? Per me era un mito (...) e poi vengo a sapere che ha fatto quello che ha fatto (...) per me è stato uno choc. Che facevo? Me ne tornavo a casa come se niente fosse? Io non ce l'ho fatta. Sono rimasto qua per cercare di capire, ecco cosa me ne veniva in tasca. Sai, la verità è che siete voi [the community of exiles] che non volete più parlare di queste cose. Voi volete solo fare finta di niente, ma come fate a vivere così?

Jacopo, who works as a journalist for a small television network, would like to broadcast the interviews to publicize the condition in which the whole group of refugees are living:

Io voglio darvi l'occasione di passare in prima persona, in modo che la gente vi conosca come siete veramente. Io voglio raccontare come vivono delle persone che hanno un conto aperto con la giustizia, e non possono più tornare nel loro paese e sono costrette a vivere in un altro. Io voglio raccontare i vostri problemi, voglio raccontare il rapporto coi vostri figli, cosa gli avete detto, cosa gli direte.



The film derives from the personal experience of the director, the younger half-brother of a refugee in Paris, and is clearly inspired by Turco's preceding documentary. In this respect it is an example of a double indirect self-narrative – that of the protagonists of the documentary, and that of the director himself.

Ho deciso di fare questo film per una ragione precisa: perché mio fratello che io ho conosciuto bene solo da adulto era uno degli ultimi esuli a Parigi. Volevo conoscere meglio mio fratello e questo gruppo di esuli.

At the same time, the film also exemplifies those 'dramatic encounters' within and between generations which characterize the texts I shall examine in the next part of the chapter.

The explanations sought by Jacopo from Dario anticipate those tacitly demanded by Dario's daughter Olivia, who is upset after having secretly watched one of the interviews, which has made her fear that her father might have killed someone:

Dario: Perché non parli con papà? (...)  
 Olivia: Paura.  
 Dario: E di cosa, amore? C'è papà.

For the moment, Dario can avoid giving an explanation to his daughter, who is still small and for whom reassurance is enough. But the potential conflict which could erupt between the two is metaphorically implied by the already existing conflict with Jacopo.

The film is divided into three parts. The first opens with the wedding of Dario and Fabienne, his French companion, to which Dario's father, Pietro, and Jacopo have been invited. The film opens with a family scene, although later the meeting between Dario, Jacopo and Pietro is characterized by strong tension which culminates in

yet another split between father and older brother. However, this is offset by a rapprochement between the two brothers, who try to rediscover each other. The first part of the film, on the one hand, proposes the motif of the 'normalizing' narrative, through the recognition and reappropriation of family values that had been previously repudiated: Dario is now getting married and has built a new family. On the other hand, it suggests a circular non-recognition: Dario, in fact, hardly recognizes his half-brother Jacopo and, metaphorically speaking, he does not recognize Pietro as his father either, since he addresses him by his first name. Besides, his relationship with his father had been marked by a double lack of recognition. When he was young, his father had not 'recognized' him legally and later, when he learned that his son was implicated in the killing of man, he had said that 'Uno capace d'ammazzare non è più figlio mio'. Dario says to him:

Quando sono nato non mi hai neppure riconosciuto. Per lo stato non sono manco figlio tuo. (...) Lo sai quando ti ho chiamato papà? Ero appena scappato, non c'avevo una lira e lo sai cosa mi hai risposto? 'Hai fatto le tue scelte e ora devi avere il coraggio di pagarne le conseguenze'.

In the documentary *Vite sospese*, the second motif around which the self-narratives revolved was that of the arrival in Paris: a moment of uncertainty and pain but also the chance for a fresh start, thanks also to the solidarity of the other comrades living there. In *Vite in sospenso*, right from the sequences of the wedding celebration there emerges the sense of belonging to a community which shares the same precariousness, the same anxieties over separation from the family in Italy and the same fears, triggered by Jacopo's use of a television camera.

In the second part of the film, these fears grow. There is tension both between Jacopo and Dario and between the two of them and the rest of the group as a result of

Jacopo's idea of filming the interviews, which generates different reactions. Some of them are in favour but most are anxious and then afraid that Jacopo might be an infiltrator who could harm them. In the last part, the tension that had mounted is dispelled. Dario and Jacopo rediscover and 'recognize' each other as brothers and the other exiles recognize Jacopo for who he is: 'solo un ragazzo qualunque'.

Unlike the documentary, the fiction film is centred on one character, Dario, around whom revolve not only his new family (Fabienne and Olivia) but also his original one (Pietro and Jacopo) and the other refugees. The narrative thus brings together present and past, but also hope for a better future through the figure of little Olivia. Dario's house is also the place of important encounters: it is where Jacopo comes to stay, where the others gather, where the photographs and the newspaper cuttings which refer to Dario as a young terrorist are kept. It is also interesting to note the motif of the journey within the progression of the plot: Dario's escape from Italy; the journey from Italy of Jacopo and his father, but also the car journey made by Dario, Fabienne and Olivia in the opening sequence when, after the wedding ceremony, they are travelling metaphorically towards a new life. In addition, the motif of the father-child relationship appears on different levels. It is present metaphorically in the relation between Dario and Jacopo, since the latter occupies a filial position, and literally between Pietro and his sons Dario and Jacopo, and between Dario and his daughter Olivia.

In one sequence the two brothers are together in the park, one on a bicycle, the other running. Jacopo asks Dario why he became a terrorist but Dario replies defensively that he was not a terrorist, that the terrorists were those who planted bombs. This sequence recalls the initial one in *Colpire al cuore* in which the father runs and his son rides beside him. Whilst, in Amelio's film, this sequence is a prelude to a rupture, in

Turco's film it introduces a process of clarification and rapprochement between the two brothers which is finally resolved in a final sequence which both echoes and inverts the first, in which Dario, now running alone, is stopped by Jacopo who is sitting on a low wall waiting for him. This time, Dario decides to answer his question:

Jacopo: E tu sei riuscito a perdonarti?  
 Dario: E che ne so? Per perdonarmi prima dovrei capire, dovrei sentirmi diverso da come ero allora. Invece sono sempre lo stesso, sono stato capace di sparare a uno poi adesso lavoro, faccio figli, tale e quale a lui. Non mi sognerei di sparare a uno (...) io non chiedo niente a nessuno. Sto così, c'ho paura, di quello che dirò a mia figlia. Ho paura di lei che cresce e diventa grande.(...) Non so che abbiamo dentro, che è successo, che c'è successo.

In the film there are no precise ideological references, for instance to the political context which induced these former activists to engage in armed conflict. The motifs of the new family, of integration by some of the group into paid employment, and of nostalgia for the distant family, add up to a normalizing narrative. It seems that the characters have only superficially managed to turn over a new leaf and their lives are consequently scored through by anxiety and pain. They have neither clear reasons nor justifications for what they have done.

#### **Other normalizing narratives: Paola De Luca, Luigi Rosati, Gianfranco Pacino**

Menotti Bucco, who comes from Naples and had been working in Paris as an independent film-maker and photoreporter, has made two documentaries about the Italian exiles in Paris: *A mezza altezza*, presented at the Turin Film Festival in 2000, and *Sola andata per Parigi/Aller simple pour Paris* (2003). He had come into contact with some of the refugees through an initial friendship with Luigi Rosati. *A mezza altezza*

offers Paola De Luca, Oreste Scalzone, Paolo Persichetti, Cesare Battisti and Luigi Rosati visual and verbal space to recount their own self-narratives. Menotti Bucco told me in an interview:

quando ho scoperto la vita degli esuli parigini ho pensato subito che andasse raccontata. Ma non volevo rievocare gli anni Settanta, anche perché non li ho vissuti. Volevo invece raccontare le persone, le loro esperienze individuali, le difficoltà di queste loro vite, in qualche modo ‘sospese’, nell’oblio.<sup>32</sup>

He wanted to show them ‘nella loro complessità di persone che hanno fatto delle scelte che non rinnegano, pur riconoscendone degli errori.’<sup>33</sup> He would have preferred to have shown them all together, as they appear in the first scene when they are seated around a table in a bar, but they wanted to speak and present themselves individually. Their preference may be related to the fact that they have different self-narratives to tell. The common motifs are similar to those I have identified in *Vite sospese* but the chronological order of events is substituted by a ‘freer’ order determined by the flow of memory. There is also a sense of narrative development, which shows some of them as subjects who have reflected on their own past experience.

Paola De Luca and Luigi Rosati in *A mezza altezza* relate the experience of having children as profoundly important, one of the fundamental themes of their progressive and normalizing narratives, as it was also in the narratives in Marco Turco’s documentary. Through this motif, perhaps, they can join their own story to a master narrative which makes them intelligible to the outside world, to an audience who have not shared their political choices but are more likely to be able to share the emotional story of their parental experiences. Paola De Luca says in *A mezza altezza*:

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<sup>32</sup> Interview by e-mail with Menotti Bucco, 8 April 2004.

<sup>33</sup> *Ibid.*

è il momento della nascita della prima figlia (...), un miracolo (...), questa rivelazione improvvisa dell'essere madri. Il figlio piglia all'improvviso tutta l'importanza possibile nella propria vita è una nuova forma d'amore, un nuovo apprendimento, una meraviglia costante e poi è un divertimento estremo. La prima volta è una scoperta straordinaria, la seconda la aspetti, arriva ed è ancora straordinaria, un'altra cosa, scopri che c'è ancora un altro amore possibile, scopri che si è dei pozzi di affetto virtuale che poi diventano reali e da cui si può attingere tutta la vita.

Luigi Rosati says, also in *A mezza altezza*: 'La paternità ti dà un di più di forze, di energie, come corrispettivo delle nuove responsabilità e dei nuovi doveri che hai, ti senti più forte, più ricco.' This is the same man whom Adriana Faranda describes as the absent father of Alexandra, her first daughter, and about whom Silvana Mazzocchi has written in *Nell'anno della tigre*:

Luigi non aveva mai fatto mistero di tenere l'interesse per la politica al primo posto e di non essere disponibile a rinunciare all'idea di collezionare esperienze e amori.

Quel giorno di febbraio del 1971, quando Ale era nata alle sei di mattina, suo marito era in clinica. Alla bimba aveva dato appena uno sguardo ed era subito sparito. Si era ripresentato solo a tarda sera, per cinque minuti. (...) Come al solito si era mostrato frettoloso e infastidito. (...) Privilegiare la consuetudine della politica all'eccezionalità di quell'evento magico le [Adriana Faranda] sembrava mostruoso. Aveva continuato a protestare, aveva cercato di spiegare perché non riusciva ad accettare quel suo atteggiamento. Finché Luigi le aveva mollato uno schiaffo.<sup>34</sup>

In both of Menotti Bucco's films Luigi Rosati presents himself, as well as father and husband, as an expert on African music and culture, which he feels conveys 'valori e punti di riferimento di collettività e di solidarietà e spiritualità' and is 'capace di penetrare l'essenza delle cose'. His situation is different from that of the others because his sentence has expired, and his self-narrative is clearly affected by this positive

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<sup>34</sup> Silvana Mazzocchi, *Nell'anno della Tigre. Storia di Adriana Faranda*, Milan, Baldini & Castoldi, 1994, pp. 40-41.

'ending'. He is free to return to Italy, but he has decided to stay in Paris where he has a new family and a job. In both documentaries he says he regrets nothing he has done, claiming that it would be too easy, with the benefit of hindsight, to see things differently from how he had seen them when he was twenty:

Era una ricerca di un modo diverso, non individualista, non ancorato ai valori materiali. È finita questa ricerca perché i protagonisti di questa lotta si sono troppo identificati con il potere che combattevano usando talora spesso gli stessi mezzi e la stessa cultura e la gente a un certo punto non ha più capito.

The self-narrative of Paola De Luca, who appears only in the first of the two films, *A mezza altezza*, is also shaped by reflection on the past. She talks of realizing her own naivety and of her decision to seek a new life, but also of an effort to maintain a continuity with her former self:

Ho sempre tentato di mantenere una continuità con ciò che ero, non tanto per affezione personale, perché grazie a Dio non ne ho un gran ché, quanto perché mi parrebbe poco leale e poco onorevole chiudere con determinate esperienze facendo finta che non sono mai successe e inventarmi un personaggio nuovo. Certe volte è duro perché mi fermo a bocca aperta ad ammirare quanto posso essere stata stupida ingenua e impreparata, ignorante, a pensare che sarebbe stato curato dallo stesso processo rivoluzionario (...). Altri ci hanno cercato giustificazioni di tipo storico-ideologico, a me interessa poco (...), soprattutto perché, a livello personale, mi pare importante mantenere un'attenzione su ciò che si è stati e su come si cambia. Come si cambia? (...) accettando la fatica comune quotidiana. Questo si riflette nel lavoro e nella cura, per quanto mi riguarda ci credo molto, ai figli, nel tentativo di allevare (...) delle persone serene, pacifiche attorno a sé. Avere il coraggio di esaltare il ruolo pacifico senza che questo tolga l'aggettivo rivoluzionario dal proprio lessico perché penso che certe scelte di pace possano essere più rivoluzionarie di certe scelte di guerra. Penso che l'obiettivo di distruzione del nemico l'ho lasciato dietro di me e ne sono estremamente felice. Non credo che si possa immaginare un conflitto che abbia come esito la distruzione del nemico (...); è necessario accettare che ci sono varie ragioni e che ogni ragione ha la sua legittimità.

Paola De Luca and Pino Mitrani appear also in *Ciao 'Bella Ciao'* (2002) by Jorge Amat. In this documentary, however, the director concentrates chiefly on reconstructing the climate of the 1970s. It is not the self-narratives of personal experiences of the escape, of the exile and of Parisian life that are prioritized, as they are in Bucco's two films, so much as the description, the memory of what happened, of the marches, demonstrations and slogans, shown in extensive archive images. The film attempts to give prominence to the cultural and collective perspective of activists in the movement, and tries above all to answer the question 'Est-ce que l'exil a changé leur manière de voir leur passé politique?'.<sup>35</sup> Armed violence is recalled towards the end of the film. Not surprisingly, in the light of what we noted in Chapter One, it is depicted with archive pictures of the massacre in Via Fani, the discovery of Moro's body in the Renault 4, and the photograph of him against the BR flag in the People's Prison.

It seems to me that this documentary has two main strengths. The first is that it gives a voice not only to the most famous refugees – Battisti, Scalzone, Negri, Persichetti – but also to less well-known ones like Pacino, De Luca, Aldo Caravati, Anna Soldati, and Jean-Baptiste Marongiu. The second is that it tries to describe and explain how its subjects came to join the clandestine groups. The director has sought to stimulate their memories of the origins of that decision. Morelli starts by reflecting on his Communist upbringing:

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<sup>35</sup> Jorge Amat in the press book (*Dossier de Presse*) for the film, of which he sent me a copy, ambitiously listed the main questions he wanted to address: 'Qui sont-ils ? | Quelle est leur histoire ? | Quel a été le facteur qui les a faits basculer, les uns dans la subversion sociale, les autres dans la lutte armée? | Quel prix a payé chacun pour son engagement? | Comment certains ont-ils vécu la prison, l'évasion, la fuite et l'exil? | Les différentes expériences dans l'exil? | Que sont-ils devenus après 10 ou 15 ans d'exil? | Comment vivent-ils l'éloignement physique avec leurs lieux d'origine et leur famille? | Quelle a été la solidarité, l'entraide entre exilés? | Comment vivent-ils leurs racines italiennes? | Sont-ils prêts à revivre dans leur pays? | Est-ce que l'exil a changé leur manière de voir leur passé politique? | Quel est leur regard sur l'histoire de l'Italie depuis leur départ?' (p. 3).



ma mère m'a appris à être communiste, comme honnête (...) comme regard vers les autres, regard vers soi-même, respect de soi-même pour respecter les autres, c'est une femme exceptionnelle. Donc, je suis né dans un milieu communiste, en plus c'était le milieu de l'après-guerre (...).

After this, he claims to have 'marché tout seul'. Gianfranco Pacino recalls how he gave up research at university to 'intervenir contre les injustices sociales'. Paola De Luca was a *liceo* student from a bourgeois family when she was captivated by a demonstration. In this way, although the film does contain some normalizing and development self-narratives, above all in relation to the subjects' working lives – Gianfranco Pacino is filmed in his medical research laboratory, Pino Mitrani in his restaurant, Cesare Battisti relates his early successes as a writer – they are not dominant.

In order to lend weight to his interpretation of the 1970s as a moment of great turbulence the director inserts comments by two experts: Yann Moulier Boutang, known chiefly for his involvement with the Negri case, and Alexandre Adler, who describes the *anni di piombo* as 'une guerre civile prolongée, maintenue dans le fantasme des gens'.<sup>36</sup>

### **The self-narrative of the 'rebel ego': Cesare Battisti**

The Battisti case hit the headlines in Italy once again in February 2004 when the Italian government again requested, and this time obtained, his extradition from France, despite the fact that the French Government had refused it in 1991. Battisti was arrested, then freed on parole in March 2004, but on 22 August he failed to report to his parole

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<sup>36</sup> Adler is, however, a controversial and contradictory figure, despite the fact that he is considered by some to be 'la référence en matière de géopolitique et de conflits internationaux'. See the eloquently entitled critical article by Mathias Reymond, 'Portrait d'un omniscient', *Le Monde diplomatique*, June 2005, p. 36.

officer.<sup>37</sup> Two life-sentences had previously been passed in absentia against Battisti for his membership from 1977 to 1979 of the armed group PAC (Proletari Armati per il Comunismo), but the French courts maintained he was not extraditable because it does not recognize sentences passed when the accused is not present. By fleeing from justice, Battisti wanted to avoid serving punishments for convictions which he considered the result of an unjust and flawed legal system, characterized by the violations and abuses typical of emergency procedures.<sup>38</sup>

Battisti considers himself to be a scapegoat convicted on the basis of the statements of the *pentito* Piero Mutti.<sup>39</sup> The PAC, of which he was a member (according to his accusers, one of the leaders), was concerned primarily with the exercise of armed counter-power against prisons and prison personnel. In June 1978 members of the PAC killed Antonio Santoro, the chief officer of Udine prison. On 16 February 1979, as part of their struggle against those who ‘collaborano con le forze dell’ordine o si ergono a giustizieri’, they in turn made themselves executioners and killed Lino Sabbadin and Luigi Pietro Torregiani, respectively a butcher and a goldsmith, at about the same time in two different cities, Venice and Milan. The last action carried out by the PAC was the killing of the Digos agent Andrea Campagna. After this, many of their members were arrested, others fled, others still went into Prima Linea.<sup>40</sup> Battisti is accused, on the basis of Mutti’s testimony and as the request for his extradition states, of having taking part in organizing the killing of Sabbadin and Torregiani and of committing two other murders.<sup>41</sup>

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<sup>37</sup> Comité Lyonnais de soutien à Cesare Battisti, *Cesare Battisti. Face au marchandage*, Paris: Jean-Paul Rocher, 2004, p. 13.

<sup>38</sup> Evangelisti et al., *Il caso Battisti*, p. 3.

<sup>39</sup> <http://www.vialibre5.com>: *Communiqué de Cesare Battisti à l’AFP: ‘Je n’ai pas tué’* (last visited July 2005).

<sup>40</sup> <http://www.ethnoland.it/italiano/AnnidiPiombo/Guerriglia.html> (last visited July 2005).

<sup>41</sup> Valerio Evangelisti, ‘Come fabbricare un mostro. Cesare Battisti e i media italiani’, in Evangelisti et al., *Il caso Battisti*, p. 72.

Battisti constructs his own self-narratives in three of the films I have already mentioned – *A mezza altezza*, *Sola andata per Parigi* and *Ciao 'Bella Ciao'* – as well as in *Résistances* by Pierre-André Sauvageut. I speak of self-narratives in the plural because, in my view, he effectively constructs two different ones. Although these contrast with one another they often appear intertwined. The first is that of a 'rebel by nature': an *active* rebel in the past – Battisti portrays himself as a trouble-maker, the inevitable product of the turbulent 1970s – and also as a *potential* rebel in the present, restrained, apparently, only by his writing. The second self-narrative is that of a subject who, chiefly through his writing, has been 'rehabilitated' from his own past and redeemed from the subaltern condition of the exile. The effect of the co-presence of these two self-narratives is a double representation by Battisti of his own self, characterized, in the first case, by transgression and irreverence and, in the second, by normalization. The normalization, however, remains only partial because, as I have noted, the narrative of the rebel is not confined to the past but also appears as a potential outcome in the present.

The first type of self-narrative, that of the 'rebel by nature', emerges in Battisti's account of his escape in *A mezza altezza*, *Sola andata per Parigi* and *Ciao 'Bella Ciao'*, though with some differences in form between the three versions. In the first documentary, the irreverence is greatest, both in tone of voice and gesture, while in the second and third he seems more contained. This might also be because in Amat's documentary he speaks in French, which may have restrained or at least filtered his tone. In all three documentaries, Battisti describes his escape in 1981 from jail at Frosinone as a 'miraculous' event, comprising a 'test of friendship, an act of love' performed by friends who had waited for him and risked their own liberty in order to free him. In *Sola andata per Parigi*, the words and images of the RAI news broadcast

follow Battisti's narration. They confirm the extraordinary nature of his escape and flight and produce one of those rare moments in which the protagonist's self-narrative and the media narrative coincide.

In *Ciao 'Bella Ciao'* Battisti mentions his flight from Italy with mythic undertones: 'passer la frontière à pied, c'était l'hiver, c'était la neige, c'était une vraie odyssée'. The flight is sometimes described by Battisti as having happened by chance, although more often the emergency laws and thus injustice are represented explicitly as the 'causal linkage' that led him to make that choice. In his self-narrative as rebel there is no room for him to explain his precise reasons for taking part in the armed conflict. Rather, he attributes it vaguely to the 'context of revolt' of the 1970s and the accident of finding himself aged twenty at that moment of agitation. The 1970s are remembered as a 'lunga onda d'urto', an overwhelming 'cultural movement', and the armed struggle as something inevitable in those years, which one found oneself 'pushed into', as had happened to him:

la lotta armata è stata una tappa *inevitabile* degli anni settanta, un fatto *inevitabile*. Ci si *ritrova dentro* non perché uno ha fatto un piano di destabilizzazione dello stato, come è stato detto, nel progetto degli anni di piombo, o per tutte quelle stronzate lì, *uno ci è spinto dentro*, non dimentichiamoci che gli anni settanta sono stati i miei vent'anni, anni di libertà, di un grande sogno, un grande movimento culturale. Sono i vent'anni, la voglia di fare e di ribellarsi, e che per una volta erano loro, quelli in divisa, a scappare. Questa è una cosa che mi sosterrà tutta la vita.

The result is a depiction of himself as an accidental rebel, driven by a social and cultural 'agentive situation' which imposed itself on him and others. In this representation, the 'context of revolt' subsumes personal liberty, making it become, as Stepnisky and Mos maintain, 'an expression of a larger historical movement in which they [people] are

participants'.<sup>42</sup> It is interesting to observe how Battisti's self-narrative here in effect slides together the violence of the extraparlimentary movement with that of the clandestine armed groups, and makes them both part of the same determining context of revolt which drives the individual's action.

Parallel to this self-narrative of the 'rebel by nature', Battisti constructs that of his development from 'accidental perpetrator' to normal person, one who has changed, but who is also unfairly a victim, along with others, of the Italian penal system and exile. In the three documentaries, he tells of coming to Paris after ten years in Mexico and, finding on his arrival former comrades who had lived 'come se il tempo non fosse passato, come tra parentesi', while he (and he presents this as positive) had managed to forget and move on.<sup>43</sup> A prominent element of his 'normalizing' self-narrative and his self-image as victim of exile is his account of the remorse he felt at not being able to be close to his parents when they died: 'non ero lontano per colpa mia, ero obbligato a essere lontano'. This motif also appears in his novels. In *Travestito da uomo* we read:

Nella sua testa si accavallavano immagini di un passato recente e remoto (...). Era riuscito a mettere a fuoco il viso del padre, quel vecchio che era sopravvissuto al cancro e alle umiliazioni della polizia con la sola speranza di poterlo rivedere prima della fine, e che era morto dopo essersi fatto leggere l'ultima lettera che Claudio gli aveva fatto pervenire.<sup>44</sup>

The normalizing narrative is also evident in *Sola andata per Parigi*. In the section called *Cuscus* Battisti is shown cooking for the family and then trying to teach his daughter Italian.

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<sup>42</sup> Jeffrey Stepnisky and Leendert P. Mos, 'Freedom in Self Narration', in Maiers et al., *Challenges to Theoretical Psychology*, p. 202.

<sup>43</sup> I have not discussed Battisti's text *Avenida Revolucion*, Ozzano dell'Emilia (Bo): Nuovi Mondi Media, 2003, because it deals, in fictionalized form, with his exile in Mexico.

<sup>44</sup> Cesare Battisti, *Travestito da uomo*, Bologna: Granata Press, 1992, p. 53.

A key motif of Battisti's normalizing and progressive self-narrative is the account of his activity as writer, which he presents as indicative of his professional development. He claims he started writing out of a desire to describe the terrible situation of *the other* refugees in Paris, which was far from being the 'esilio dorato' described by the Italian newspapers. At the same time it is precisely in this normalized account of his own life that elements emerge of the self-narrative of the 'natural rebel': he has not turned introspective but has simply sublimated 'la voglia di far casino' by channelling it elsewhere, into his writing:

se non sbattessi la testa contro il computer mi metterei e mi sarei messo nei guai. Sono uno che combina guai. (...) gli editori mi tengono lì buono. Scrivere è stata la mia salvezza. Se non avessi cominciato a scrivere mi ritroverei chissà dove, in galera probabilmente, perché per me scrivere è un modo di sublimare: invece di entrare in azione veramente lo faccio attraverso la fiction; rischio meno e ci guadagno pure qualche soldo. (*A mezza altezza*)

non potevo evitare di cominciare a scrivere, avevo delle cose da dire perché non si può scrivere se uno non ha niente da dire. Per me è stato un grande sfogo (...), mi ha tolto quell'aggressività, quella voglia di ribellarmi, di mettermi nei guai come già mi ci ero messo (...) ho sublimato la voglia di far casino; continuo a farlo, lo faccio attraverso quello che scrivo, attraverso il roman noir. (*Sola andata per Parigi*)

In *Résistances*, Pierre-André Sauvageut has sought to focus purely on the self-narrative of Battisti as a writer and, in particular, as the author of his most recent novel, *Le Cargo sentimental*. This tells the story of three generations – grandfather, father and son – who in different ways have opposed the ruling power by 'resisting': hence the title of the documentary.<sup>45</sup> In this film the motif of an 'agentive situation' as context is combined with that of a familial *predestination* towards 'resistance' against institutional power. This motif is also found in Battisti's novel *L'orma rossa*: 'Personalmente non mi

sono mai sentito manipolato da chicchessia (...) è anche vero che se nella mia famiglia non fossero stati tutti religiosamente comunisti io non sarei finito nel Movimento'.<sup>46</sup>

The same motif, however, is completely contradicted in *Ciao, 'Bella Ciao'* when Battisti says 'je ne me veux vendre comme un cadre politique (...) j'étais un petit voleur', and he tells how, during his first period in juvenile detention he met, by chance, a young militant from the Manifesto group. He describes him according to the stereotype of the leftist intellectual – very thin, with little round glasses – uttering 'discours bizarres (...) mais très convaincants'. The theme of the adventitious nature of one's political choices also runs through Battisti's fictional narratives. It is found in the character of the father, Teodoro, in *Le Cargo sentimental*, who gets caught up by chance in the Resistance but is really just a small-time crook, and in the description of the main character in *Travestito da uomo*:

Era ricercato dall'Interpol perché condannato all'ergastolo, più di 29 anni, per attività terroristica, anche se neanche la politica sembrava essere il suo interesse principale. Si sentiva solo un sacrosanto balordo.<sup>47</sup>

*L'ultimo sparo*, similarly, centres on the experience of an 'accidental' terrorist, a 'delinquente comune', as the sub-title explains.<sup>48</sup> It is not an autobiography as such, as Valerio Evangelisti explains in the introduction, but rather the depiction of an atmosphere, a collectivity in revolt. It is the same collectivity that Erri De Luca has described (in a dialogue with Ovidio Bompreschi about the killing of police commissioner Calabresi) as potentially murderous:

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<sup>45</sup> Cesare Battisti, *Le Cargo sentimental*, Paris: Éditions Joëlle Losfeld, 2003.

<sup>46</sup> Cesare Battisti, *Orma rossa*, Turin: Einaudi, 1999, p. 90

<sup>47</sup> Battisti, *Travestito da uomo*, p. 13.

chiunque di noi di quel tempo, non solo Lotta Continua ma tutta la sinistra insorta, poteva ammazzare quel commissario senza dover formare per questo una banda armata, chiunque tranne Leonardo Marino. Lo conoscevi bene tu ed anch'io: fossimo stati noi due non lo avremmo mai scelto. Ce n'erano tanti di pronti a ogni precipizio, non c'era bisogno di uno che non ne voleva sapere, a quanto dice lui stesso. Il mio chiodo era che si doveva ammettere l'evidenza che quella accusa era compatibile con ognuno di noi, con la febbre da insorti che avevamo. Ma a dire questo, qualcuno e molti che nel frattempo avevano addomesticato il loro passato a sbronza di stagione, sarebbero arrossiti, sarebbero stati in difficoltà sulle sedie imbottite che si erano intanto procurati. Compatibili con un omicidio: che guaio per la carriera.<sup>49</sup>

Battisti himself says:

Nego totalmente i fatti specifici di cui mi si accusa e per i quali sono stato condannato. Me ne assumo la responsabilità collettiva, come dovrebbe fare ogni uomo degno di questo nome implicato in un dramma sociale di portata così vasta.<sup>50</sup>

However, Umberto Eco has made exactly the opposite point. Although critical of those who formerly identified with the extraparlimentary left and now deny any involvement ('io non c'ero'), he insists that not everyone was a potential killer, even if they may have given that impression by chanting violent slogans:

In questo calderone, in cui alcuni pensavano alla rivoluzione come alla lotta armata, altri usavano il termine come metafora di un profondo rivolgimento sociale, altri ancora ne parlavano senza chiedersi esattamente cosa fosse, è successo di tutto. Quanti però degli studenti che gridavano in corteo 'fascisti, borghesi, ancora pochi mesi' pensavano davvero che entro un semestre avrebbero dovuto fare un bagno di sangue? (...) e quante massaie, che in un'assemblea di quartiere parlavano della 'giusta lotta degli inquilini', pianificavano di rapire e ammazzare l'ingegnere Saronio?<sup>51</sup>

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<sup>48</sup> Cesare Battisti, *L'ultimo sparo. Un 'delinquente comune' nella guerriglia urbana*, Rome: DeriveApprodi, 1998.

<sup>49</sup> Ovidio Bompreschi and Erri De Luca, 'Vivere con il terremoto'/'Eravamo tutti assassini potenziali', pp. 229, 230.

<sup>50</sup> Evangelisti et al., *Il caso Battisti*, p. 4.



In *L'ultimo sparo*, the protagonist, a petty thief, escapes from the police after an armed robbery. He is helped by a peasant whose wife entrusts him with a message for her brother, Enrico Lepore, who is also wanted by the police and might be able to help him once he gets to Milan. The protagonist arrives in Milan and heads for the *centro sociale*. Here he meets a friend who says he can put him up in the apartment of good, but crazy, ex-partisan (the Resistance reappears as myth and inheritance). This arrangement does not last long and the protagonist soon moves in with others in a place that will become, by chance, his first hideout. The backdrop to the story is all about the movements, the *autonomi*, and actions undertaken to fund the group's activities. The 'ultimo sparo' of the title is one that a comrade, Stefano, decides to use against himself after having shot a man.<sup>52</sup>

Durante quelle prime riunioni mi sentivo come un pesce fuor d'acqua, ero incapace di differenziare l'uno dall'altro. Per me, parlavano tutti lo stesso linguaggio e sostenevano il medesimo punto di vista. Eppure, se riuscivano a litigare, qualche differenza tra loro ci doveva essere. Le sfumature politiche le scoprii in seguito, come quella del fine che non giustifica i mezzi. Ma era già troppo tardi. (...) Ancora non mi prendevo troppo sul serio. In quel periodo mi sentivo di passaggio, avevo solo voglia di conoscere la metropoli. Errare solo per le strade, compiacermi della solitudine e della forza tranquilla che mi sentivo dentro. O era, invece, panico?

(...)

Senti, toglimi una curiosità. Io..., beh, la mia storia la conosci, non avevo scelta. Ma tu...voglio dire, hai un lavoro, sei incensurato, come mai che di punto in bianco hai deciso di buttarti nella lotta armata?<sup>53</sup>

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<sup>51</sup> Umberto Eco, 'Gli orfani del Sessantotto', in *Sette anni di desiderio*, Milan: Bompiani, 1986, p. 12.

<sup>52</sup> It reminds us of the character Stefano il Giovane who in *Le ragioni dell'altro* commits suicide.

<sup>53</sup> Battisti, *L'ultimo sparo*, pp. 55, 62.

Sheer chance seems to characterize not only the experience of the protagonist but also the evolution of the armed group, which after a few weeks is no longer just a 'grande banda' but acquires 'lo status di Organizzazione'<sup>54</sup>.

The self-narrative that Battisti creates, therefore, both in his testimonies to camera in the documentary films and indirectly in his 'autofictional' novels, is often inconsistent. Even when he tries to give space to his normalizing narrative, presenting himself as writer and paterfamilias, it seems he cannot hide his rebellious nature. At times, in accounting for his involvement in the armed struggle, he adds the motif of predestination to those of chance and inevitability, presenting himself as a victim or even a scapegoat:

ci hanno voluto massacrare, non solo ci hanno sconfitto, ma poi hanno messo le bombe e lo hanno fatto su un grande movimento culturale che era un grande pericolo e se non avessimo pagato noi, non ci sarebbe stato Porto Alegre. (*Résistances*)

It is interesting to note, finally, that in his novels, where Battisti has complete control over his own narrative, the references to the past are more numerous and detailed than in the self-narrative accounts he gives in the documentaries, where the narrating context is controlled by the interviewer. It is in the documentaries, in particular, that his normalizing narrative of the present emerges.

### **The ego in perennial struggle: Oreste Scalzone**

Unlike Battisti, Oreste Scalzone exemplifies a case of *integrity narrative*, in which the element of continuity in his life consists of his will to oppose and resist injustice, and to

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<sup>54</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 85.

feel part of the community of refugees. In exile in Paris, Scalzone continues to fight not only to obtain political asylum for all the exiles, so that there is no difference between them in the way they are treated, but also as a crusader against the injustices endured by other minorities and marginal groups in France.

In Bucco's documentaries it is clear that Scalzone, unlike the other refugees, has not 'made a new life' for himself but is completely dedicated to his political activity: 'continuo a fare battaglie politiche per mezzi interposti' (*Ciao 'Bella ciao'*). He talks about himself, conscious of his public image and thus of the narratives that others produce about him:

Hanno stabilito che tu in realtà sei ossessionato dall'amnistia, dalla nostalgia o dalla memoria. Se per caso tu ti metti a parlar d'altro, in realtà la loro intenzionalità è che tu devi essere ossessionato dall'amnistia: è come se ci fosse un copione, e loro a dirti 'Ma chi te lo fa fare?', 'Non è abbastanza per te?'. E se poi parli degli astri ti dicono: 'Ma tu sei quello che parla dell'amnistia!'.

Erri De Luca, Scalzone's friend, who appears in *A mezza altezza*, claims to understand his attitude because 'finché quel passato trattiene nel presente di carcere e di esilio i suoi prigionieri, non passa, non ha il privilegio e il sollievo di essere passato'. Scalzone's self-narrative of perennial political commitment is validated in the sequences of the film showing him during his debate-performances. These are pseudo-theatrical self-narratives in which Scalzone tells his story, plays the accordion, sings the anarchist hymn *Addio Lugano bella* or the partisan song *Bella ciao*. He describes these as moments of his 'giornale immaginario', 'una sorta di ufo, non è teatro, non è assemblea, non è comizio però è anche tutte queste cose messe insieme. A volte può andare verso il dibattito o la conferenza patafisica'.

In the documentaries Scalzone, who obtained a French residence permit in 1998, recounts his flight from Italy on Gian Maria Volontè's boat and the previous period of militancy. But, unlike most of the other refugees, he tells these stories of the past not in order to contrast what he once was to what he has now become, but rather to present himself as an indomitable idealist who, ever since he arrived in France, has fought tirelessly to defend the rights of the political refugees. Both his political and personal life seem to be characterized by this will to fight, and yet the scenes of his struggles shown in the films – near-solitary sit-ins in remote provincial courtrooms – seem to depict him as defeated. Scalzone presents himself as an 'indomitable warrior' who, after narrowly escaping death as an infant, went on as an adult to survive beatings by fascists and illness in jail, when his weight went down to just 40 kilos. He knows he is condemned to be defeated but, despite everything, he continues the struggle. He demonstrates, in his words, 'l'orgoglio del condannato a morte, che fino all'ultimo vuole scampare alla morte, anche nel momento stesso dell'esecuzione' and he criticizes the obtuseness of those who do not understand this simple instinct, 'negando a chi è condannato non solo l'umanità, ma l'animalità dell'istinto che spinge a salvarsi la vita anche quando sembra che non ci siano speranze.' (*Sola andata per Parigi*). He does not feel himself to be a victim of exile:

Je ne peux pas le considéré un jature, peut être pour parti pris mais je dis que j'ai radicalisé un parti pris contre le discours victimiste. Je viens d'une ville de province, j'ai fait une vie très difficile, ma ho conosciuto delle persone meravigliose, grosso modo je continue à faire des batailles politiques.

Scalzone, himself, closes the documentary, armed with his accordion and a megaphone, but not before he also had remembered his mother, who was ninety at the time the film was shot and was holding on to life in the hope of seeing him again.

Often, in the interviews, while he is talking to camera, video of images of him, both in the past and now, appear on a television screen in the background. On the one hand this device alludes to the multiple of levels of presentation and creation of self; on the other it evokes the production methods used in political theatre in the 1920s by Erwin Piscator. While the stage performance was taking place Piscator projected scenes from films and other images on the backdrop:

different scenes were put together simultaneously in different parts of the theatre, sometimes even before a definite script had been worked out. Film was to be combined organically with live action on the stage for the first time (...).<sup>55</sup>

Piscator wanted to get beyond the individuality of the characters and display the 'link between events on the stage and the great forces active in history'.<sup>56</sup> In his play *Trotz Alledem! (In Spite of Everything!)*, written with Felix Gasbarra and performed at the Grosses Schauspielhaus, Berlin, in July 1925, 'the whole performance was a montage of authentic speeches, essays, newspaper cuttings, appeals pamphlets, photographs and films of the War and the Revolution, of historical persons and scenes'.<sup>57</sup>

The figure of Scalzone is also central in Francesca Solari's documentary *Addio Lugano bella*, made in 2000. The film focuses on two characters, Scalzone and Giorgio Bellini. The latter, from Canton Ticino, and now married to the director, was a supporter of the Zurich movement in the 1980s and was arrested in Locarno in 1994,

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<sup>55</sup> Erwin Piscator, *The Political Theatre*, London: Eyre Methuen, 1980, pp. 91-2.

<sup>56</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 92.

<sup>57</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 96.

accused of having taken part in an assassination and of having links with the terrorist group headed by Carlos. He was later completely exonerated. The documentary was originally conceived as an attempt to 'free' Bellini and Scalzone from the role imposed on them by the media, to rebuild their image, but it ended up becoming also the self-narrative of the director. In the film, Francesca Solari narrates her reflections in both Italian and French, as if to suggest the idea of a double belonging, bearing witness, at different levels, to her own experience of the 1970s as revolutionary, daughter, mother and feminist. The result is, in the words of one reviewer, a piece of 'stratified filmic writing',

una scomposizione dei pezzi di vita rivissuta che sono stati frammentati e ricomposti nelle varie fasi del film. Un procedimento, un lavoro che si apparenta alla psicanalisi: qualcosa che non riproduce, ma trasforma la realtà.<sup>58</sup>

Solari manages to convey in visual terms the flow of memory, which does not follow a chronological order, but loops over itself, amalgamates and transforms. The film opens with a shot of Scalzone, described by the narrator as the 'autorità del mondo che avevo scelto', a guide, a political father, now the 'sower' of individual and collective memories. He is shown during one of his performances presenting some moments of his experience of the 1970s. He lights candles to recreate the effect of Molotov cocktails; he speaks on the megaphone while inciting an imaginary crowd; he projects images of the time; he sings *Addio Lugano bella*. Once again he enacts his role of 'indomitable warrior'.

Scalzone, speaking of his relationship with violence, says that 'uno può anche pensare di sparare – e non è bello dirlo, ma non posso *riscrivere* la mia propria storia –

alle gambe di qualche imprenditore', and yet, in the very act of saying it, he is rewriting, and not simply relating, his life in a kind of Freudian negation. The reflections of the narrator-director are more intimate. She never appears in close-up and we see only partial views of her: an eye, her hair, her back. Only in one of the final frames do we see her whole face, as if to suggest that the totality of her own identity has been conquered in the course of the film, which she herself has described is a journey of memory through her own past experience, the 'revaluation of the mother figure' and of the paternal authority she had formerly renounced. Here too, then, there is the portrayal of a conflictual relationship with the father which is later resolved. Given that she has dedicated the film to her daughter Vittoria, the 'treasure' of a 'solitary motherhood', it could also be interpreted as an attempt to explain some moments of the 1970s to the generation which did not live through them. Her daughter is a young adult who recalls that, ever since she was a child, she believed that her mother could not return to Italy because 'aveva fatto le manifestazioni e la polizia non la voleva più'. It is a memory of an over-simplified and inadequate explanation, which seems to confirm the need for this documentary as a moment of reflection, offering Solari's interpretation both for herself and others.

To conclude this part of the chapter, I would emphasise that in analysing these life-stories of the political refugees in France I have sought to identify and highlight both the *recurrence* of similar narrative structures and the *diversity* of the individual self-narratives. The recurrent structures are (to use Gergen's categories) the 'temporal ordering of events', with mentions of 'causal linkages' between them, and the 'selection of related events', which includes the escape from Italy, the arrival in exile and the new

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<sup>58</sup> Fabio Fumagalli, 'Addio Lugano Bella', 13/06/2001, review in *Film Selezione*

life in France. In the majority of cases the self-narrative is one of personal development and of normalization, in which the latter represents the 'valued end-point' of the story. Normalization can mean 'settling down', as the result of work, marriage or cohabitation, the birth of children. But it can also involve, significantly and paradoxically, one's self-definition as 'victim', as someone whose freedom to move, find a job appropriate to one's abilities and, in particular, return to Italy is compromised by exile and by the juridically anomalous status of the exile. Normalization, thus, also becomes a kind of condemnation in itself because it involves the pain of separation and nostalgia, as well as other difficulties related to the new situation of the exile: for example, the need to provide an explanation to one's children.

The different self-narratives can be seen as variations on these recurrent narrative themes. Like the others, Battisti produces a self-narrative of development and normalization but he also, repeatedly, tends to present himself as 'a rebel by nature' who needs to be restrained by writing and publishers' deadlines. Scalzone, in contrast, presents himself as a refugee who has remained consistent with his political past. Another case of a self-narrative of continuity and consistency (and perhaps a more characteristically 'feminine' version) is that of Paola De Luca, who says in *A mezza altezza*: 'Ho sempre tentato di mantenere una continuità con ciò che ero (.. .) perché mi parrebbe poco leale e poco onorevole chiudere con determinate esperienze'. De Luca describes her present life as still 'revolutionary' but in a peaceful, non-violent, sense: 'Avere il coraggio di esaltare il ruolo pacifico senza che questo tolga l'aggettivo rivoluzionario dal proprio lessico perché penso che certe scelte di pace possano essere più rivoluzionare di certe scelte di guerra'.



The diversity of these individual self-narratives, although basically variations on the same theme, confirms the impossibility of that ‘group autobiography’ I mentioned at the beginning of the chapter. A collective autobiography is impossible precisely because their memories are different, as are their different ways of presenting themselves and their relations with the past.

In conclusion, it is worth emphasising once again the important difference between, on the one hand, self-narratives *controlled by the narrating subject*, whether they are ‘direct’ (memoirs and autobiographies, which I have not examined) or ‘indirect’ (fictionalized or semi-fictionalized, like Battisti’s novels or the fiction film *Vite in sospeso*), and, on the other, ‘embedded’ self-narratives, those that are contained within someone else’s text. The examples of the latter which I have examined here have all been documentary films and, in these, certain forms of the protagonist’s narration and the way it is presented to the public are *controlled and directed by others* (director, camera operator, sound technician, editor). I have emphasised how in all these films the director provides a ‘frame’ within which the self-narratives of the exiles are ‘embedded’. Here I would add that this frame can be very important in determining the type of self-narrative that is produced. For example, as we have seen, Jorge Amat chooses in *Ciao, ‘Bella Ciao’* to give prominence to memories of the past rather than to the ‘normalized’ present of the exiled refugee and he ‘frames’ the embedded interviews with many archive clips of Italy in the 1970s: demonstrations, clashes with the police, slogans, the body of Moro in the boot of the Renault 4. In this way, the embedded self-narratives in his film tend to highlight the memories of the exiled former activist and his reflections on the differences between past and present much more than the self-narratives in the other documentaries we have studied, in which the frames remain more fixed around the present life of the exiles.

### 4.3 Fictions: meetings of past and present

#### **Brief intragenerational encounters: *Tre uomini paradossali*, 'Piccoli equivoci senza importanza' and *Riconciliati***

These three fictional works revisit the *anni di piombo* from a distance of more than twenty years and all represent them through a reunion of ex-comrades. The first, the novel *Tre uomini paradossali* by Girolamo De Michele, is a detective story and the author, or at any rate the narrator, implicitly adopts a cynical position towards the activism of those years, which functions mainly as background, as pretext for the plot. The second, Antonio Tabucchi's short story 'Piccoli equivoci senza importanza', consists of the flow of memories of the narrator-character, a journalist who is present at a trial which triggers memories of his past and his former comrades. The author's implied attitude to the events of the past, as mediated through the narrator, is comprehending, even though he is aware that some of the 'piccoli equivoci', the 'little misunderstandings' of the past, had consequences which were by no means 'senza importanza' but were rather, as a minor character's slip of the tongue suggests, 'senza rimedio', irremediable. The third text is Rosalia Polizzi's film, *Riconciliati*, which tries to tackle the political situation of the *anni di piombo* in more depth by focusing on the way people change over time, on their need to come to terms with their past. The film, also, introduces the theme of the incomprehension and scepticism of a younger generation.

*Tre uomini paradossali* is the story of the disintegration of a generation through the lives of three men, three friends who have been separated because of their different political views and who come together again in 1993 as a result of a murder. The principal narrator, whose name we never know, has become a private investigator, his

friend Cristiano is in jail and Andrea is a policeman. The novel opens with a description of the morning that Cristiano, who has joined an armed organization, is getting ready to go and kill an industrialist called Varisi. There are other members of the group with him, among them 'Comandante Marco', who gets left behind during the attack and gives away Cristiano, who is then arrested. Two betrayals are thus intertwined – the one Cristiano's friends experience when he leaves them to join an armed group, and the one Cristiano himself undergoes when he is given away to the police by his own leader. After the first chapter, which is narrated in the first person by Cristiano and whose title, *Nebbie*, evokes this murky atmosphere of betrayals, there is a change of perspective with two short chapters, *Notturmo* and *Esterno*, in which the anonymous narrator, the investigator, expresses his opinion on what has taken place:

ragazzini troppo a lungo cresciuti nella bambagia smisero di mirare al cuore dello Stato, colpendo il questurino, il portaborse o l'usciera di Montecitorio, mentre uomini senza volto, seri e maturi, passavano dalle canne mozze all'autobomba. In uno degli ultimi scampoli di asilo infantile un industriale morì durante un gioco più grande di lui, e di quasi tutti i partecipanti. Anni dopo il gioco fu ripreso per caso e concluso da un omicidio per interposta persona. L'esecuzione fu affidata a me, ma non ne fui informato. Sono sempre stato troppo buono, uno di quelli che si fidano....

(...) ho vissuto per molto tempo con una ragazza che amavo, (...) una ragazza che una volta aveva anche amato la politica, come tutti noi; e che era poi riuscita a scivolare via da quello spettacolo assurdo e sanguinoso che chiamano Storia, come *quasi* tutti noi (...).<sup>59</sup>

The cynical tone of the first quotation reveals a very harsh judgement on the *anni di piombo*, with no ideological empathy for the protagonists and their actions.

The narration then shifts to the present to describe the apparent suicide of Gian Maria Dondi, a small-time tycoon who had accumulated a fortune in a short period and

had been a colleague of Varisi, the industrialist killed years before by Cristiano. The present-day story opens, as did that of the past, with a death, and the resemblances suggest there may be a link between the two deaths. This link becomes explicit when it is discovered that the same weapon was used in both killings. The investigation is carried out by the narrator and the policeman, Andrea, who, in helping one other, come to a disturbing but revealing conclusion: that the murder of Varisi by Cristiano had actually been planned by Varisi's colleagues Gian Maria Dondi and his son Alberto, whose *nom de guerre* was 'Comandante Marco'. The latter had taken for himself the role of lookout during the attack on Varisi, which he had presented to his comrades, and to Cristiano in particular, as a political action. Cristiano was therefore deceived twice, years ago, by Alberto Dondi/Comandante Marco: once over the murder of Varisi itself, which he had led him to believe was political when in fact it was the settling of a private score between industrialists; and then again when Dondi reported him and had him arrested. It is a Kafkaesque deception, although instead of a bureaucratic or state conspiracy it is an individual in this case who manipulates the situation.

The deception extends right down to the present and involves the two friends, who meet again after many years to solve the mystery of Gian Maria Dondi's death. The policeman, Andrea, encourages his friend the narrator-investigator to kill Comandante Marco/Alberto Dondi, after leading him to believe that the latter was responsible for the death of his girlfriend. On discovering how he has been manipulated the investigator reacts fiercely: 'Mi hai fatto uccidere un uomo, Andrea. Hai deciso a mente lucida di compiere un omicidio, e hai usato uno dei tuoi migliori amici per farlo. In cosa sei diverso, tu, da Cristiano o da Alberto Dondi?'.<sup>60</sup> In the end it is revealed that Comandante Marco/Alberto Dondi had pushed his own father, Gian Maria Dondi, to

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<sup>59</sup> Girolamo De Michele, *Tre uomini paradossali*, Turin: Einaudi, 2004, pp. 16, 19.

suicide. He had been working for his father for years as guardian of his villa, protected by plastic surgery which had made him unrecognizable to the rest of the world, but not to his father. Comandante Marco/Alberto Dondi first had been complicit with his father in the killing of Varisi, and had then decided to use his father's own weapons against him, punishing him by blackmailing him. Once more we have a son who *kills* a father, an oedipal motif to which the narrator makes ironic reference by quoting a fictitious article written by Francesco Alberoni:

#### EDIPO A MILANO

Una generazione che non ha saputo far dono ai propri figli di amore e felicità, scopre ora che il benessere non lenisce i conflitti fra padri e figli, ma anzi li ripropone su scala sociale: non più attorno al tavolo, all'ora di cena, ma nelle strade, sul lavoro, nel mondo. Quella di due giorni fa non è stata una manifestazione politica, ma una rappresentazione edipica. Due generazioni che, separate da un muro, non hanno altro da dirsi se non inviarsi messaggi di...

...eccetera eccetera eccetera

Per alcuni di loro, giù in basso, c'erano forse Edipo, col suo carro sporco di sangue, il suo incombente destino e il suo piedone rigonfio. Per altri, c'erano i propri figli in carne, ossa e revolver. Che non avevano bisogno di ricorrere ai consueti mercanti per procurarsi le armi: bastava il cassetto della scrivania di papà. O la cassaforte di Villa Dondi, dalla quale la Smith & Wesson risultava miracolosamente scomparsa.<sup>61</sup>

The notion of bringing about someone's death for ideological reasons is completely cancelled, reduced to a cover for personal motives. Even the character of Cristiano, who is in jail serving time for having been a hired assassin *by chance*, while he believed he was acting as a revolutionary, is described in a caricatural way, as if the author wanted

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<sup>60</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 190.

<sup>61</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 27, 28.

to condemn the naivety of the ideals which prompted many young people to engage in armed struggle. Overall, a bitter judgement is passed by the main narrator on the 1970s:

In quegli anni *ingiusto* era un aggettivo che implicava sempre un elemento di provvisorietà, di transitorietà. Oggi la vita ci appare ingiusta, senza sensi reconditi. Semplicemente, ineluttabilmente ingiusta.

Non ci saranno discussioni.

Non sta a noi rievocare, recriminare, riesumare. Niente spiegazioni, chiarimenti, delucidazioni, i dubbi resteranno dubbi, le domande sospese resteranno nell'aria, le nostre vite riprenderanno a marciare faticosamente sopra i fangosi sentieri che percorriamo, ciascuno per conto suo, anche dopo il nostro incontro.<sup>62</sup>

Once again, a collective memory of those years, shared by a whole group, seems impossible. The encounters depicted in the text are dramatic because they reveal only resigned individuals whose actions, in the past and the present, seem to belong to the realm of score-settling between members of different families, in a style that is more mafia-like than motivated by political beliefs.

The story 'Piccoli equivoci senza importanza' opens Tabucchi's collection of the same name, published in 1981. In it the theme of a gradual realization in the aftermath of the *anni di piombo* unfolds by means of the stream of memories of one of the characters, Tonino. He had been the most passive and taciturn of the group at university and is now a journalist. The driving force of the story is really the chance presence of Tonino at a trial presided over by Federico, a former comrade who has become a magistrate. Federico finds himself having to judge another ex-comrade, Leo, accused of having been a member of a movement involved in armed struggle. Thus, Tonino sees his former friends again and his memory begins to switch between images of present and past, between courtroom and lecture room, between the jurors who enter

the court and the student protest marches. The motifs of the flow of memory and the passage of time are central to the text as whole:

il tempo ha barcollato ed è precipitato verticalmente: e attorniato da bollicine, galleggiando in una pozza di anni, è affiorato il viso di Maddalena(...) In un attimo, sempre come in un vecchio film, mentre stavano seduti là in fondo, uno con la toga e l'altro dentro la gabbia, il tempo ha cominciato a fare la giostra senza ordine, tipo foglietti del calendario che volano via e si riappiccicano l'uno sull'altro.<sup>63</sup>

The words bring up moments of the past which intertwine with the memory of the witness now. The roles of *Antigone*, played by the former friends from *liceo*, are re-enacted so that they become characters twice over: in Tabucchi's story and in Sophocles' tragedy.<sup>64</sup> Federico, who had played Creon at school, is now the magistrate who, like the king of Thebes, sets himself up as defender of the state and its institutions.<sup>65</sup> The words of the play have now become one with the sense of the proceedings, and his past as co-conspirator seems so much forgotten, that Tonino, incredulous and bewildered, asks a silent question: 'Ma perché devi fingere di stare così attento, non ti racconta niente di strano, quell'inverno c'eri anche tu'. Leo represents the

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<sup>62</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 135, 136.

<sup>63</sup> Antonio Tabucchi, 'Piccoli equivoci senza importanza', in *Piccoli equivoci senza importanza*, Milan: Feltrinelli, 1981, p. 13.

<sup>64</sup> As regards recollection and imagination, Tabucchi himself has stated that in his short stories the characters 'camminano dandosi la mano' (in Claudio Cattaruzza (ed.), *Dedica a Antonio Tabucchi*, Pordenone: Associazione provinciale per la prosa, 2001, p. 75). As for tragedy, Jennifer Burns has noted that 'The stories of *Piccoli equivoci senza importanza* in particular are all inspired by literary works (...): "Piccoli equivoci senza importanza" refers to Greek tragedy, "Anywhere out in the world" to Baudelaire, "Rebus" to both Proust and the *giallo* genre. In a sense these two collections are encyclopaedic macro-texts, encapsulating a world of literature which has autonomy from the "real" world and seems, to a degree, self-sufficient and self-perpetuating' (Jennifer Burns, *Fragments of Impegno: Interpretations of Commitment in Contemporary Italian Narrative, 1980-2000*, Leeds: Northern Universities Press, 2001, pp. 63, 65).

<sup>65</sup> 'Antigone', *Sophocles I*, Transl. by F. Storr, The Loeb Classical Library, Cambridge MA: Harvard University Press, 1981, vv. 666-75: 'Whome'er the State | Appoints, must be obeyed in everything, | Both small and great, just and unjust alike. | I warrant such a one in either case | Would shine, as King or subject; such a man | Would in the storm of battle stand his ground, | A comrade leal and true; but

figure of Polyneices, who has dared to take up arms against his country and for that finds himself in conflict with Federico/Creon. Their former schoolmate Maddalena is Antigone who, in vain, defends the reasons of the heart against those of politics and, destined to failure, wastes her youth in solitude, crushed by fate, which, in Tabucchi's story, assumes the form of a breast tumour. Now, as then, Tonino plays the part of the chorus, commenting on the proceedings from outside without being able to express the sympathy he feels for Antigone. The words he speaks from the first *stasimon*, 'molte sono le malvagità del mondo, ma l'uomo le supera tutte', which Sophocles had used to begin his meditation on the ambiguity of man's progress, are intended to comfort Maddalena who is about to go into the operating theatre, but she is unable to grasp their meaning.<sup>66</sup>

Like all of Sophocles' characters, Federico, Leo, Maddalena and Tonino are enclosed in their own world from which they are unable to communicate: 'allora mi è venuta voglia di attraversare l'aula e di arrivare fino al bancone tra i flash dei fotografi e di parlargli, di stringergli la mano a tutti e due (...) Ma cosa potevo dirgli, che si trattava di un piccolo equivoco senza rimedio?'.<sup>67</sup> Like the characters in the tragedy, they end up being ground down by fate, a mechanism which is more powerful than the will of individuals and which finally imparts to the decisions taken a weight and a direction which are completely beyond their control. It is what Aristotle calls *hamartia* (fault) as opposed to *cachia* (evil) and *mochtheria* (vice).<sup>68</sup>

In the light of these considerations, a judgement seems to emerge which is quite ambiguous towards armed conflict. On the one hand Federico is presented as defender

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Anarchy – | What evils are not wrought by Anarchy! | She ruins States, and overthrows the home, | She dissipates and routs the embattled host; | While discipline preserves the ordered ranks.'

<sup>66</sup> Tabucchi, 'Piccoli equivoci senza importanza', p. 12.

<sup>67</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 16.



of institutions, but inevitably the reference to Sophocles' Creon sheds the sinister light of the tyrant on him. Creon is a tyrant who considers himself the single absolute authority of the state. He demands of his subjects, even of the members of his family, total obedience, and he knows no other way than force. On the other hand, Leo, like Polyneices, does not act out of gratuitous evil but by committing *hamartia*, an error of judgement, finds himself taking a road that he would not deliberately have chosen for himself:

non è mai stato così radicale, il Leo, lo faceva per farmi fare brutta figura con Maddalena, ad ogni modo, un po' per convinzione o un po' per caso si trovò a ricoprire un ruolo di primo piano, diventò il più importante del gruppo, ma anche per lui fu un piccolo equivoco senza importanza. E poi sapete com'è, succede che la parte che uno si assume diventa vera davvero, la vita è così brava a sclerotizzare le cose, gli atteggiamenti diventano le scelte.<sup>69</sup>

Something similar had happened to Tonino himself: 'comunque in verità delle rivoluzioni non me ne importava molto, lo facevo perché c'era una ragazza dai capelli rossi che si chiamava Maddalena della quale ero innamorato'.<sup>70</sup> Despite this reference the text does not present the choice of armed conflict, unlike *Tre uomini*, as a childish whim or a manipulation of individuals for personal ends.<sup>71</sup> Rather it seems to suggest that the actions of those involved in the armed struggle, like Leo, brought unexpected consequences for which the price to pay was extremely high. According to the narrator, Leo

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<sup>68</sup> 'Such a person is someone not preeminent in virtue and justice, and one who falls into adversity not through evil and depravity, but through some kind of error'. Aristotle, *Poetics*, 1453a, 8-10.

<sup>69</sup> Tabucchi, 'Piccoli equivoci senza importanza', pp. 14, 15.

<sup>70</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 15.

è solo la rotella di un ingranaggio che lo ha stritolato e ora lui sta recitando la parte di chi manovra le leve di quell'ingranaggio, ma lo fa per tener fede alla sua figura, lui non ha mai manovrato nessuna macchina e forse non ha neppure nessuna spia da fare, è soltanto il Leo.<sup>72</sup>

Tabucchi's story also shows the different outcomes of the lives of a group of friends, but, unlike the plethora of opinions and reconsiderations that we shall see in *Riconciliati*, here we have only one voice, that of Tonino, who tries to get close to his ex-companions, but they turn out to be unreachable. In the first scene, all three are in the same room and yet they cannot meet, they cannot communicate.

Tonino's encounter with his ex-companions happens mainly at the level of memory – 'Eravamo al Caffè Goliardico, ognuno con il suo libretto, scrutavamo i piani di studio (...) al gruppetto si era unito il Memo' – and, at the end of the story, at the level of dream:

sul canale c'era una chiatta rugginosa come se non avesse il motore, le sono passato accanto e sopra c'erano il Leo e Federico, uno con la sua aria strafottente e l'altro con la sua aria grave e penosa, che mi guardavano con espressione interrogativa (...) e in fondo alla chiatta, come se guidasse il timone, c'era Maddalena splendente di giovinezza che sorrideva (...).<sup>73</sup>

In this image, the characters are close but immobile: they do not communicate, they do not explain themselves and, as in the other portrayals of reunions of ex-comrades, they do not share a common assessment of the past. Their assessments are individual, made up of images (memories and visions) more than words. We see again here a pattern that is often repeated in the fictional representations of the post-*anni di piombo*. Of the

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<sup>71</sup> De Michele, *Tre uomini paradossali*, p. 16: 'ragazzini troppo a lungo cresciuti nella bambagia smisero di mirare al cuore dello Stato colpendo il questurino, il portaborse o l'usciera di Montecitorio, mentre uomini senza volto, seri e maturi passavano dalle canne mozzate alle autobomba'.

<sup>72</sup> Tabucchi, 'Piccoli equivoci senza importanza', p. 15.

<sup>73</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 10, 17, 18.

former comrades one is usually in jail, while the others have remade their lives and have taken on an institutionalized role, either as policeman, judges, or investigators (in *Tre uomini paradossali* there is both a policeman and an investigator), or in the field of information, as journalists.

*Riconciliati* (2001) is the second feature film by Rosalia Polizzi, an Italian director with Argentinian roots who has always shown interest in social issues. Her television films include *Pasolini fra cinema e letteratura*, *Incontro con Camilla Ravera*, *Eleonora Fonseca Pimentel* and *Il caso Baraldini*. *Riconciliati* continues themes already explored in her first feature film, *Anni ribelli*, although in a different way. The latter, screened at the Berlin Film Festival in 2002, tells the story of an adolescent girl from a Sicilian immigrant family which had emigrated to Buenos Aires in 1955, the last year of the Perón government. Private and public issues intertwine and family quarrels develop against the background of political unrest of the time. *Riconciliati*, as Polizzi told me

è stato scritto nel '98 e girato nel 2000, vale a dire ad una certa distanza dalle passioni più brucianti. Un tempo e una distanza che avrebbero permesso (pensavo), a me, ai personaggi e attori del film e al pubblico cui era destinato, la possibilità di un incontro con il passato senza storture schematiche o troppo soggettive. Così è nata l'idea di raccontare l'incontro durante un weekend di un gruppo di amici cresciuti insieme nei magnifici anni '60 e nei durissimi anni '70, con opzioni diverse ma raccolte nel mito della rivoluzione totale. Che spunto migliore se non l'uscita dal carcere di uno fra i protagonisti, quel Roberto Ferro (Franco Castellano), che aveva preso la strada estrema della lotta armata ed era finito in prigione, mentre gli altri, fuori, erano riusciti a preservare le loro vite (e le loro coscienze)?<sup>74</sup>

The film opens with a scene of simulated armed violence amongst children in a park. The reference to arms runs through the film, right up to the last sequence in which a Palestinian child is shown firing a gun. After the opening scene in the park, Eva (Ana

Valeria Dini), the daughter of the protagonist Malena (Beatriz Spelzini), is shown pointing a toy gun at her mother. In the following sequence, it is Malena herself who looks for a pistol hidden in a drawer and points it at her own reflection in the mirror. This sequence projects Malena into the past, introducing the next sequence in which she receives a telephone call from Francesco (Lorenzo Majnoni) an ex-comrade, who invites her to turn on the television to hear the news that one of their ex-comrades, Roberto Ferro (Franco Castellano), who had been imprisoned for political murder, is getting out after 18 years. We already guess that the one-time companions have taken different paths. Francesco has become a television journalist and another two ex-comrades, Antonello (Giovanni Vettorazzo) and Patrizia (Beatrice Palme), work for him, together with Clara (Maira Grassi), a younger female journalist who has not lived through the 1970s. It is interesting to note that all the main actors, in Polizzi's words, were

molto attivi e molto impegnati nella militanza politica durante gli anni '70; (...) cossiché l'identificazione con situazioni molto vicine a quelle da loro vissute nella realtà hanno reso possibili momenti di improvvisazione e partecipazione che non sempre si ritrovano durante la gestazione di un film.

The television news is the element around which the plot of the film develops. Roberto travels home, to Rome, to his mother who has been waiting for him, to try and find out which of his companions betrayed him by revealing to the police the hideout where he was staying while he waited to escape from Italy. Antonello, the journalist who reported Roberto's provisional release, will be shown to have been also the informer. Thus, the same character is the relayer of information which has both

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<sup>74</sup> This and subsequent quotations from Rosalia Polizzi are from my e-mail interview with her of 25

restricted (through imprisonment) and then enlarged (metaphorically in the second case) Roberto's space. The news of Roberto's release is important because it prompts a reflection on how facts are presented through the medium of television. Indeed, together with the words of the journalist, reported subsequently, there are archive images of protests and demonstrations in the 1970s (for example the one in Rome over the killing of Giorgiana Masi by police gunshots during a demonstration on 12 May 1977):

Tre noti esponenti del partito armato degli anni settanta-ottanta hanno ottenuto la libertà condizionata. Si tratta di Roberto Ferro, Giuseppe Livori e Marco Zappacosta.

Nel 1982 furono ritenuti colpevoli dell'omicidio premeditato del magistrato romano Urbano Gandolfi e condannati a una pena detentiva di ventidue anni. Dopo qualche tempo si sono dissociati e per questo hanno goduto di uno sconto della pena. Ora dopo 18 anni di prigione si sono aperte le porte della prigione di Trani.

Ora vediamo una scheda biografica dei tre (...). Roberto Ferro, ex studente fuori corso della Facoltà di Architettura di Roma. Suo padre, Giuliano Ferro, morto nel 1946, aveva preso parte attiva alla Resistenza. Anche la madre (...) era stata una staffetta partigiana durante l'occupazione tedesca. In questi giorni in cui si discute di indulto e amnistia la scarcerazione ha provocato forti polemiche in Parlamento e sgomento nell'associazione delle vittime del terrorismo.

The announcement of the release uses a stereotype recurrent in representations of the perpetrators of political violence, namely that of their origins as predestination: their class background, their university studies, the ex-partisan parents (as if the Resistance contained a possible historical cause of their becoming revolutionaries). Francesco, partly out of a sense of moral obligation to his former comrades, wants to organize a special programme containing an interview with his newly-released friend, along with other interviews and archive footage, in order to trace Roberto's progress from 'scheggia impazzita' (another stereotyping definition, which suggests that his

choice of violence was a form of madness) to what he has now become: a person who has 'repented within himself' ('pentito interiormente'). In this way, he wants to promote debate on the pardon and help make the public aware of the issue. The planning of the interview triggers a discussion of the political choices made in the past also by the other ex-comrades. Antonello maintains that 'a nessuno gliene frega più niente' about those years and, seeing himself in the archive material throwing a Molotov cocktail he says that he does not recognize himself anymore. Clara, his young colleague, replies 'Ecco un altro che non si riconosce, meno male che non avete vinto'. Through the character of Clara the director has represented the generation which came after the *anni di piombo* in a very negative way. Her scepticism is shown in a few arrogant remarks which do not demonstrate any empathy or desire to learn more.<sup>75</sup> They are often followed by the comments of 'those who were there', who show that attachment to 'possessive memory' which has been observed in some members of this generation: only they can understand because those memories belong to them.<sup>76</sup>

Parallel to the experience of the struggle and the incarceration of Roberto, the director shows the experience of Malena. She escaped in 1981 from Argentina where she had been part of a clandestine organization reporting the disappearance of people under the dictatorship. As well as through the character of Clara it is through Malena's relationship with her two daughters that the director highlights the motif of explaining to the next generation, and in particular to one's own children, what one has lived through, the choices made, the price paid.

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<sup>75</sup> In another sequence Clara is choosing clips from an interview given by Roberto ten years earlier. When Antonello remarks that Roberto was the best looking, the most intelligent, of them, she adds: 'il più stronzo: uno che spara alla gente così o è pazzo o è stronzo'.

<sup>76</sup> See Peter Braunstein, 'Possessive Memory and the Sixties Generation', *Culturefront*, Summer 1997, pp. 66-69; I have used the Italian translation by Monica Luciano, 'La memoria possessiva e la generazione degli anni Sessanta' in <http://dinamico.unibg.it/acoma/15/7.pdf> (last visited 09/07/2005).

The moment of reckoning amongst the ex-comrades comes when, by chance, some of them turn up uninvited at the home of Malena and her husband Nanni (Emilio Bonucci), where Roberto and his mother have been invited to dinner. Among them are Antonello and Francesco, who have a television camera and ask (referring to Roberto) 'dove è il nostro eroe?'. What follows is a sort of painful version of *The Big Chill* in which, as one of the characters puts it, 'il disagio di ciò che eravamo e il dolore di non esserlo più' are combined. On this occasion, the constant reference to Argentina and the struggles there against the dictatorship of 1976-83 suggests a parallel at two levels. The first is the shared vision of what Polizzi describes as 'rivoluzione come riscatto e sogno di giustizia':

Anche se la loro battaglia è andata perduta, possono ancora ritrovarsi e riprendere il dialogo interrotto tanti decenni prima. Certo, i loro destini sono stati molto diversi e vi sono tra di loro rancori e diffidenze difficile da superare.

The other parallel is that of betrayal by an informer, which has affected both Malena and Roberto. Even though the two of them were betrayed in different countries and for different reasons the effects in both cases have been devastating. The condemnation of the act of informing is achieved above all by the characterization of the informer, who has weak reasons for his betrayal. Polizzi wanted to portray, in the character of Antonello,

un debole, anche un vigliacco incapace di sopportare un minimo di dolore fisico, visto che nel film dice di aver ricevuto dalla polizia calci e schiaffi. Ma è anche un risentito, un invidioso: ha tradito l'amico Roberto *anche* se l'amava. O forse *proprio* perché lo amava? Secondo lo scrittore Lanza del Vasto, Giuda avrebbe tradito non per denaro come ci riferisce la tradizione, ma per amore, perché geloso dell'attenzione che il Cristo dava agli altri apostoli mentre ignorava

proprio lui, Giuda, il più colto, colui che lo capiva meglio di tutti. Ovvero il tradimento per esistere, per farsi notare.<sup>77</sup>

There is also a condemnation of informing in the words that Nanni reads from his diary, written at the time:

La vita mi ha risparmiato il dolore di denunciare il mio più caro amico anche se lui ha ingannato me e gli altri. Ho esecrato il suo crimine, ma sono vissuto in questi anni diviso tra la mia coscienza civile e il mio sentimento più intimo e ho deciso di seguire quest'ultimo. Come disse qualcuno: 'Oh noi che abbiamo voluto apprestare il terreno alla gentilezza, noi non si potè essere gentili'.

During the reunion, Roberto forms his own self-narrative of a passage from 'perpetrator to victim', saying he has paid the price on behalf of all of them who fought against the system, getting blood on their hands: 'voi siete vissuti sulla mia condanna'. Roberto decides to do the interview Francesco has proposed and when Clara asks 'farai il pentito come tutti gli altri?', he replies:

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|------------|--|
|            | No, perché io non mi pento assolutamente di niente e non rinnego assolutamente niente della mia vita e non sono un delatore. Mi dispiace. Mi dispiace per il giudice e per la sua famiglia, certo, ma non rinnego le mie idee. |
| Francesco: | Ma le nostre idee di allora non contenevano già implicita la logica della violenza? (...) a pensarci a come eravamo allora mi sembra tutta una grande follia collettiva. (...)   |
| Roberto:   | (...) ogni epoca ce li ha, i suoi vinti e i suoi vincitori (...) voi credete che io me lo meritavo tutto il castigo, il carcere, la vita perduta?  |
| Nanni:     | Sì, perché voi avete fermato la storia di questo paese per venti anni.   |

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<sup>77</sup> The text by Del Vasto that Polizzi refers to is *Judas* (Paris: Grasset, 1938). In the film Antonello says: 'Ero quasi innamorato di te, come di tutti voi; mi hanno portato via nel cuore della notte, m'hanno riempito di calci nei coglioni. Ho semplicemente fatto il nome di una via e il numero e sono tornato a vivere'.



In the interview, however, he says, on the contrary, that he would not repeat any of the things he had done. He thus constructs two different images of himself, a public and a private one:

- Interviewer: Rifarebbe quello che ha fatto?  
 Roberto: Non rifarei tutto, non rifarei nulla di quello che ho fatto.  
 Interviewer: Che cosa l'ha spinto?  
 Roberto: L'amore per l'umanità.  
 Interviewer: A uccidere?  
 Roberto: Di quello ne porto tutto il peso, ho chiesto perdono alle mie vittime, ai familiari delle vittime, per le mie azioni. Però bisognava esserci in quegli anni, le stragi senza colpevoli, quello che avveniva intorno a noi, la Grecia, il terzo mondo.  
 Interviewer: Però lei non è considerato un pentito legale, voglio dire lei non ha mai rivelato il nome dei suoi complici.  
 Roberto: Io mi sono dissociato, ripeto, io mi sono pentito, ho chiesto perdono a tutti nel mio intimo e ho scontato il mio delitto, ma non ho voluto aggiungere la delazione.

The interview goes out as part of a live broadcast from a neighbourhood end-of-summer party, as if rhetorically to emphasise the end of a generation and of a historical period. The appeal for pardons is repeated as well as one for funds for a reception centre for immigrants, another socially marginalized group. Just as the television news report of Roberto's release from jail had set the story in motion, so the final shots of *Malena* intercut with archive images of violence that she believes she is seeing on a television screen close the film, with a circular symmetry which emphasises the role of the media.

The film's title probably alludes to reconciliation with one's own past at both an individual and a social level (through reinsertion into society), despite the fact that the intragenerational dialogue between the ex-comrades in the reunion consists of conflicting voices. The former chorality of the group experience and the sense of

collective belonging are no longer present. Once again, only individual reckonings are possible.

The film also introduces, unlike the other two works I have discussed in this part of the chapter, also the theme of intergenerational difference and conflict, through the figures of Clara in relation to her older colleagues and of Malena's daughters in relation to their mother. Overall, *Riconciliati*, of the three works considered in this section, is the only one that tries to explore the political reasons for past actions and how and why the comrades from those times have changed.

#### **Theatres of memory: *Le ragioni dell'altro* and *Segue comunicato***

The last two texts I want to examine in this chapter – the theatrical works *Le ragioni dell'altro* and *Segue comunicato* – also contain encounters and dialogues in which the *anni di piombo* are recalled. However they take place not between members of the same generation but between different generations: a younger and older self in the first case, a mother and daughter in the second. Both the plays, moreover, address the theme of exile, but with a fundamental difference. *Le ragioni dell'altro*, written by Roberto Silvi, an Italian ex-refugee in Paris, and Cecilia Calvi, developed from an original idea for a double autobiography which was to have been written by Silvi and Cesare Battisti. It links to the texts analysed in the first part both because of Silvi's former connections with the Parisian exiles and also because, like Battisti's novels, it is a fictionalized self-narrative. *Segue comunicato*, on the other hand, is a purely fictional work. The theme of intergenerational confrontation between former members of armed groups and their children, which was touched on both in the documentaries I discussed and in *Riconciliati*, forms the core around which both of these theatre pieces are constructed. In addition, *Le ragioni dell'altro*, with its hybrid nature as a semi-fictional work and as

indirect self-narrative, demonstrates some of the other motifs I identified in the self-narratives of the exiles.

Silvi had been part of what he describes as ‘quella variegata nebulosa che fu il movimento della lotta armata in Italia degli anni ’70.’<sup>78</sup> After taking refuge in Paris at the beginning of the 1980s he contracted multiple sclerosis. He wanted to be free to be treated where and how he chose, without restrictions caused by his refugee status, and for this reason he decided to return to Italy in 1992, giving himself up to the police and declaring that he was ready to serve the rest of the sentence he had been given for forming an armed group. His position with respect to the situation of the Italian exiles in Paris emerges clearly from his words:

ma dopo vent’anni chi si condanna? Si colpisce ancora la stessa persona che ha commesso il reato vent’anni prima? È pensabile poterla mettere in prigione o si esercita soltanto un inutile e ingiusto atto di vendetta?<sup>79</sup>

Silvi maintains that a man should not be accused and incarcerated for something he did twenty years ago, particularly if in the meantime he has changed his life and his ideas, broken his connections with armed conflict and begun a new life in France, even though he has never renounced the cause, ‘dissociated’ or ‘repented’. This view becomes the guiding thread of *Le ragioni dell’altro*, which was first performed in Rome in July 2003 and of which the script was published in March 2004. It takes the form of a dialogue between an older self and his younger alter ego. As I mentioned, the play originated from narrative material written previously which was to have been incorporated into the projected novel with Battisti. In alternate chapters each was to

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<sup>78</sup> <http://www.stefanoborselli.elios.net>, n. 81, *Un’amicizia: Roberto Silvi e Paolo Persichetti*, p. 1 (last visited 15/07/05).

<sup>79</sup> *Ibid.*

have recounted the different ways in which they had lived the experience of militancy of the 1970s. The project never came to fruition and Battisti finally published his own autofictional narrative as *L'ultimo sparo*. The meeting between Silvi and Calvi, a stage designer who had chosen the theatre as her preferred form of political involvement in the years of the armed struggle, offered him a new opportunity to go back to the material, modify it and enrich it. In an afterword to the published script, Calvi explains how the narrative material Silvi had already written gave her the chance to reflect on what she had not been but might have been, and to understand what had remained of those years in someone who had lived them differently from herself:

quali erano i suoi pensieri, i suoi sentimenti, le sue emozioni, le sue contraddizioni durante un'azione violenta ed eclatante? Quale parte di lui è sopravvissuta a quel terremoto psicologico, a quell'autodisciplina feroce, a quel sogno dissolto in una profonda ferita?<sup>80</sup>

The theatre seemed to Calvi the best medium to 'infrangere un po' quel silenzio imposto dalla "cultura della rimozione" a raccontare una storia di allora e di adesso'.<sup>81</sup> The play stages the encounter, in the form of an imaginary dialogue, between a middle-aged man, Stefano, who has multiple sclerosis and is intent on writing his life story, and himself as a young man. The text is, as Silvi says,

fortemente autobiografico, rappresenta gran parte della mia vita ma non tutta, e in alcune parti non solo la mia. Nel raccontare questa storia, come succede sempre nei romanzi, e in tutti i lavori di scrittura, mi sono scisso: da una parte l'autore, dall'altra il narratore della storia. Io sono l'autore ma il narratore è Stefano il Vecchio.<sup>82</sup>

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<sup>80</sup> Roberto Silvi and Cecilia Calvi, *Le ragioni dell'altro/Les raisons de l'autre*, Paderno Dugnano (Milan): Colibri, 2004, p. 94. Reviewed by Alessandro Mantovani, 'Memoria', *Le Monde Diplomatique*, Italian edition, 5 June 2004.

<sup>81</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 91.

<sup>82</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 92.

The desire to confront his own past is doubly represented by the metanarrative frame within which the encounter takes place: Stefano il Vecchio is at his computer writing the story of his life, recalling his own youthful experience of the armed struggle, when Stefano il Giovane materializes within the room and an exchange of opinions and feelings ensues. The encounter between them thus gives expressive form to a dialogue with the memory of one's own past which turns out to be conflictual. Stefano il Giovane does not recognize himself in Stefano il Vecchio's words and this gives rise to an argument which, even though it takes place within one self, can be considered intergenerational and resembles a row between father and son: 'Ma che cazzo stai dicendo, tu non ti ricordi più come ero ed ora ti stai raccontando delle storie addomesticate'.<sup>83</sup> Stefano il Vecchio narrates events with hindsight, he judges certain attitudes – particularly those which wiped out his private life in the name of an ideal – to have been wrong:

non c'era differenza tra pubblico e privato. La vita era manifestare, scendere in piazza, occupare fabbriche, difendersi dalla polizia, armarsi per il comunismo. La famiglia era per noi morta, al suo posto c'era il movimento.<sup>84</sup>

Stefano il Giovane on the other hand speaks *from* that time and the doubts that do emerge are not explored: 'Si rischia la vita propria e quella degli altri per ragioni che ormai sfuggono, per una causa data per scontata, scritta una volta per tutte, non per qualcosa di vivo da mettere in discussione ogni giorno'.<sup>85</sup> The interaction between the

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<sup>83</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 34.

<sup>84</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 59.

<sup>85</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 61.

main character and his alter ego can be resolved only by the elimination of one of the two. It is Stefano il Giovane who decides to kill himself:

Stefano il Giovane: Ormai siamo troppo diversi, uno di noi deve sparire.  
E tocca a me.  
Stefano il Vecchio: Sei la mia storia, sei la mia vita.  
Stefano il Giovane: Sono solo il frutto della tua memoria.<sup>86</sup>

The other play, *Segue comunicato* (1998) by Alessandro Trigona Occhipinti, also evokes what one has been and compares it with what one is now.<sup>87</sup> Cecilia finds herself recounting her own experience in the armed struggle to her son, Paolo. Her account takes the form of a staged reconstruction of successive moments of an abduction by the 'Brigate Comuniste' in which she took part. As in *Le ragioni dell'altro*, where the older and younger Stefano meet and confront each other, so, on the stage in *Segue comunicato*, as the stage directions indicate, there are Cecilia of the Present and Cecilia of the Past, but they do not meet. The characters in the present (Cecilia and Paolo) and those in the past (the man who has been abducted and two terrorists) move together on the right of the stage but they do not interact, while on the other side of the stage there are only props: a lamp, a coffee table, a camp bed and, fixed to the wall, a flag made of red cloth with a yellow star in the centre and the caption 'portare l'attacco al cuore dello stato'.

In this play the dramatic encounter between characters belonging to different generations takes the form not only of Cecilia's encounter, in memory, with her younger self but, above all, her encounter in dialogue with her son who, born and brought up in Paris, has been till now unaware of the sentences passed against his mother. Cecilia's

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<sup>86</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 88, 89.

reflections on her own past are triggered by the news of the murder of Massimo D'Antona (20 May 1999), for which the Nuove Brigate Rosse claimed responsibility. She is shocked and her son asks her to explain. Cecilia feels she must tell him that she herself was a member of an armed group. She tries to set out her reasons, but she wavers between recognizing that she made a mistake and wasted her life and needing to find a justification for her choices: 'No! Non [ero] una terrorista, [ero] una comunista combattente'. Her son retorts: 'Mamma, tu eri...tu sei una terrorista!'. The reasons for the choice of the armed struggle are expressed both in the dialogue between Cecilia and the characters from the past – the abducted man and her comrades – and in that between her and her son. Once again there emerges the adventitious nature of the choice and the misjudgement of the situation – 'Mai avrei potuto immaginare... Avevo quasi diciott'anni quando ho iniziato a "fare" politica. All'inizio sembrava poter essere un gioco, solo un gioco' – and the naivety and idealism which drove her: 'volevamo cambiare il mondo', 'ci sentivamo buoni', 'C'era una logica, una logica in tutto questo, anche se oggi è difficile crederlo', 'una guerra iniziata per un sogno... Per una follia... Un ideale... Un niente...'.<sup>88</sup>

The story of the arrival in France, characterized by a strong sense of precariousness, is present also in this fictional text as it was in the self-narratives I examined earlier. Exile is represented by Cecilia as a punishment, not only at the practical level in everyday life, but also because it has deprived her, and all the other veterans of the struggle, a political identity and the opportunity of testifying to what happened in the past:

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<sup>87</sup> The script of *Segue comunicato* is available on <http://www.dramma.it/libreria/libreria.htm>; a non-definitive draft was published in *Prima Fila*, December 1998-January 1999.

<sup>88</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 45, 14, 8.

senza affrontare le mie responsabilità, senza poter dire quello che anch'io ho da dire su quello che è stato. Sono rimasta già troppo a lungo chiusa in quella stanza, in quella stanza vuota. Così tanti anni lontana (...). Una generazione sequestrata alla vita.<sup>89</sup>

È il peso del niente, dell'indifferenza di oggi, a rendermi tutto quanto più insopportabile. Se di tutto quello che è stato fosse rimasto almeno qualcosa, allora sì che sarebbe per me più facile sopportare il peso dei miei sbagli, di quello che ho fatto. Forse... forse potrei anche sperare. Invece di soffocare. Con il niente che c'è intorno, in questa assurda quotidiana immolazione al nulla.<sup>90</sup>

The conflict that erupts between her and her son, who calls her a murderer ('assassina'), and the recollections of her own past, are such as to persuade Cecilia to hand herself over to the Italian authorities:

Accetterò di collaborare con la magistratura nella prospettiva di chiarire storicamente i fatti più eclatanti di cui sono a conoscenza. Il nostro impegno deve andare, da oggi, nel senso di chiudere con questa pratica e di dissuadere chi sta per impugnare le armi. Da parte mia ho fatto la mia scelta, in pieno possesso delle mie facoltà e nella libertà di esprimermi come meglio credo. Saluti comunisti.<sup>91</sup>

Alongside the representation of the dramatic encounter and dialogue with her son there is the staging of a few moments from Cecilia's past as jailor and interlocutor of the captive, who is indicated simply by the generic name of 'Uomo' and described as an 'esimio intellettuale', 'fine analista', 'grande commentatore della stampa borghese'. As a victim of abduction Uomo clearly evokes Moro (though as a journalist rather than a politician he perhaps also bears a resemblance to Carlo Casalegno, the deputy editor of *La Stampa* killed by the BR in November 1977) and in the depiction of Cecilia as jailor there are a number of motifs typical of the representations of the Moro case that

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<sup>89</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 45.

<sup>90</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 46.

<sup>91</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 59.



we noted in the first chapter. Indeed, this part of the play seems to draw directly on Laura Braghetti's *Il prigioniero*, and can in this respect be considered almost a parallel work to the later *Buongiorno, notte*. The author allows Cecilia to conduct dialogues with the captive, with the next generation in the figure of Paolo, and also with the Law, in that at the end she decides to go back to Italy and collaborate with the magistrature. The vocabulary used by the members of the armed group is also reminiscent of the BR's communiqués during Moro's abduction – 'tribunale rivoluzionario',<sup>92</sup> 'Prigione del popolo', 'Le masse insorgeranno', 'Presto ci sarà la rivoluzione'.<sup>93</sup> The terrorists are admonished by Uomo, who points out that their 'violenza è quanto mai funzionale al sistema': 'vi stanno usando', 'Troppi vi hanno lasciato fare. Vi hanno lasciato crescere. E vi hanno lasciato soli. Ad impazzire. Per meglio servirsi di voi'.<sup>94</sup> Although clearly sagacious, Uomo also expresses his fear and the sense of solitude which haunts him. Cecilia, like Chiara, takes pity on him, while her companions remind her that there is no place for tender feelings. The conflict over what to do with the hostage is represented but Cecilia herself finally pronounces the death sentence:

In base al processo proletario a cui sei stato sottoposto, in base agli elementi emersi durante questo interrogatorio, in base all'analisi di questi elementi, le Brigate Comuniste concludono il processo a tuo carico condannandoti a morte per tradimento. *Lungo silenzio. Cecilia e Massimo, affiancati come un plotone d'esecuzione, puntano le pistole su Uomo.*

Uomo's reply also parallels the sequence at the end of *Buongiorno, notte* when Moro walks free towards EUR:

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<sup>92</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 6.

<sup>93</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 21.

<sup>94</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 37, 38.

Aspettate! Non siete, non siete voi che ammazzate me. Non siete voi. Sono io, io che me ne vado. Che me ne vado via da qui. Da voi. Per sempre. Io! *Fa per voltarsi e varcare la porta. Buio.*

*Segue comunicato* is a kind of *summa* of all the motifs through which the political violence of the left has been represented and which I have highlighted in this thesis. It is a play which fictionalizes a portrayal of an abduction, one which recalls that of Moro; the protagonist is a woman, in voluntary exile in France, who is forced to remember, explain and reckon up the cost of the choices she made in the past; she comes to make this reckoning as a result of the questions asked by her son, the member of the next generation.

#### 4.4 Conclusion

The fictional dramatic encounters, both those among the 1970s generation and between generations, demonstrate, like the self-narratives of the exiles I examined earlier in this chapter, the impossibility of a uniform 'group autobiography'. There is no shared approach to the past, no shared way of dealing with the period of armed struggle, of integrating or incorporating it into a narrative. Just as the self-narratives showed notably different forms of self-representation, so in the fictional works the characters show different ways of relating to their past and of remaking their lives in the present.

As I mentioned above, only Rosalia Polizzi's film, out of the works I have analysed here, really tries to explore the complexity of the protagonists' situations, both in the past and the present. The presence of Malena, who has fled from Argentina, reinforces the attempt in the film to demonstrate the complexity of the position of the ex-activists of the armed struggle in Italy by introducing a parallel with another country

which, although it had a very different political history from Italy, had some similarities in its experience of a clandestine movement, of informers and state repression. Although the fictional works do not examine the past in depth, and although they do not have, as the self-narratives do, the value of direct and 'authentic' testimonies, they do tend to give more space and emphasis to the past. They tend, too, more than the self-narratives, to weigh up the past and propose critical analyses of it.

Many of the self-narratives produced by the Italians in exile are normalizing narratives in which the past serves as a kind of baseline against which their subsequent development and change is to be measured. Only in the case of 'integrity narratives', like Scalzone's and, in part, Paola De Luca's, does the past acquire more significance on its own terms. By contrast, the fictional narratives depict more forcefully the *break* between present and past. This break takes the form of a dramatic (and often also traumatic) encounter. This holds good not only for *Riconciliati* but also for Tabucchi's short story 'Piccoli equivoci senza importanza' and the two theatre pieces of which one (*Le ragioni dell'altro*) stages and semi-fictionalizes the experience of an ex-activist and former exile.

These representations of the post-*anni di piombo* period seem to confirm that sense of disorientation which Marco Tullio Giordana recounted in his film *Maledetti vi amerò* (1980), and to a certain extent also in *La caduta degli angeli ribelli* (1981) through a story of a personal crisis. The first film tells the story of Riccardo, nicknamed Svitol, a character whom the director intended to represent, as he told me,

una specie di residuo dei movimenti politici giovanili della fine degli anni '60 che, tornando in Italia dopo un soggiorno di cinque anni in Sud America, ritrova il paese completamente cambiato. Sono spariti tutti i movimenti giovanili cancellati dall'emergere del terrorismo, fenomeno del quale non solo il

protagonista non capisce nulla, ma non vuole nemmeno capire. Rendendosi conto di quanto sia ormai radicalizzata la violenza del terrorismo da un lato, dello Stato dall'altro, non sentendosi di prender partito né per gli uni né per l'altro, Svitol decide di morire mettendo in scena la propria morte come una sorta di suicidio politico. Tra le due alternative – rientrare nei ranghi o accettare il disordine – Svitol rifiuta entrambe le semplificazioni. Il film è in un certo senso l'illustrazione di quella posizione intermedia – a quei tempi si diceva “né con le BR né con lo Stato” – che rispecchiava il disorientamento di molti intellettuali, posizione in realtà impraticabile, vissuta con grande sofferenza.<sup>95</sup>

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<sup>95</sup> Interview with Marco Tullio Giordana, Bologna, 9 March 2003.

## Afterword

Mi auguro che tra dieci anni ci siano state produzioni artistiche di altro livello su quegli anni che mi facilitano il terribile compito di dire a mio figlio chi è stato il padre.

(Valerio Morucci, interviewed in Rimini, 6 May 2005)

Through the close analysis of texts in the four chapters of this thesis I have sought to identify the most recurrent patterns in the representation of left political violence in Italy, dividing up the material according to the main thematic motifs, character types and narrative structures. Chapter One identified echoes of classical tragedy in the figure of the captured Aldo Moro, in the narrative of the public man ‘dissolved from form’ in Sciascia’s expression, and in the various representations of the conspiracy theory, in which the forces behind the abduction appear to act like the hand of an implacable fate. Chapter Two focused on the rebellious son or daughter (usually a leftist militant or terrorist, though *Colpire al cuore* reversed the normal roles) and the narratives were those of intergenerational conflict and attempted reconciliation. Chapter Three examined two different representations of the female terrorist: the *madre snaturata* who repents and rejoins society, in part by rediscovering her maternal feelings, and the intransigent and unrepentant woman who is set off against a female ‘good double’ and a ‘normalized’ male ex-comrade and ex-partner. What these two types of narrative about women had in common was that they mainly showed the effects of women’s choice of joining the armed struggle and emphasised the idea of ‘normalization’ and reintegration, which, in the respective types, either succeeds or is shown to be impossible.

'Normalization' reappeared as a key feature in some of the texts analysed in Chapter Four, the self-narratives of former activists of the extreme left now in exile in France, which in several cases tended to erase or limit the account of the political past in favour of a narrative focused on their present lives. By contrast, the fictional or semi-fictional 'dramatized encounters' between former terrorists, their children and/or their ex-comrades, are designed to be stock-takings or settlements of accounts with the past.

These categories, which I have separated for convenience into different chapters, also cross and connect up with one another. The representation of Moro is present not only in Chapter One but also, more or less openly, in Chapter Two (*La voce nel pozzo*) and Chapter Four (*Segue comunicato*), and in general when the texts refer to a victim from the political arena. The intergenerational relationship, the central motif in Chapter Two, is important also in the conflict between Moro and the brigatisti (Chapter One), and it is present, albeit inverted, in Chapter Four, where the former activists are now parents concerned about how to explain their armed political involvement in the *anni di piombo* to their children.<sup>1</sup> The theme of the *double* is explicitly present in Chapter Three, but it is also implicit in the relationship between Moro and the state in Chapter One, in the conflict between fathers and sons in Chapter Two (in some 'primitive' cultures the son was believed to be the father's double)<sup>2</sup>, and in the self-definitions of the former activists in relation to their remembered selves in Chapter Four.

The analysis of the texts and their constituent motifs and narrative structures led me to conclude that the representations of political violence perpetrated by militants of

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<sup>1</sup> Some of these former activists, who were considered 'cattivi maestri' on the grounds of their alleged role in 'leading' young people into violence, now fear being considered 'cattivi padri' in the private sphere. It is interesting to reflect on why some of intellectual leaders, for instance Negri and Sofri, were described as 'cattivi maestri' while others, such as Curcio, are often characterized in more positive terms.

<sup>2</sup> A.E. Crawley, 'Doubles', in James Hastings (ed.), *Encyclopedia of Religion and Ethics*, Edinburgh: Clark and New York: Scribner, 1908-1926, Vol. IV, p. 857: 'A man is thus his own father and his own son simultaneously'.

the extreme left were frequently rooted in established social and cultural conventions and they often reproduced traditional norms and roles. Sons and daughters, after rebelling, either come back home, or serve prison sentences, or die. Women who refuse to be mothers in order to become terrorists later become desperate and restless and either convert to what they are supposed to be 'naturally' or else they too die or continue to pay the price in prison. If they remain intransigent, their lack of 'penitence' is marked by suffering and physical and emotional displacement: they are prevented from seeing their families of origin. This is also the case with the real Italian exiles in Paris. The latter are not in jail but they still feel to some extent imprisoned. They are often restless and in some cases feel in conflict with themselves.

As well as identifying the main features included in these motifs and narrative patterns, I have also drawn attention to their *erasures*, in other words to what they exclude, what they fail to represent. Norman Klein has stressed, in another context, the importance in political history and collective memory both of images, fixed or stereotyped, and of the erasures around images:

If we concentrate, the imago seems waiting for us intact: a photo, a document, a table of statistics, an interview. It remains where we put it, but the details around it get lost, as if they were haunted, somewhat contaminated, but empty. Imagos are the sculpture that stands in the foreground next to negative space.<sup>3</sup>

The main erasure in the fictional representations of the left armed struggle is, as I have pointed out in several places in the thesis, that of the perpetrators' more political aims and motives, which are either excluded altogether or only alluded to vaguely. The result is that violence appears as an end in itself. What is missing in most of these

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<sup>3</sup> Norman M. Klein, *The History of Forgetting: Los Angeles and the Erasure of Memory*, London: Verso, 1997, p. 4, 5.

representations are precisely those connections that Adriano Sofri has reminded us existed in the late 1970s between the ‘moral choice’ made by some of those who had entered the extreme left movement, driven by revolutionary aspirations, and the rigorous attractions of a commitment to terrorism:

La rivoluzione cessava di essere un desiderio, si preparava a diventare un rimorso. Alcuni di loro, che avevano preso le mosse da una scelta morale, [si sentirono] (...) pronti a morire per la causa, per una causa (così infatti fa la sua prima comparsa il tema della violenza nel cuore dei giovani) nel terrorismo diventarono pronti ad ammazzare, finché ammazzare diventò la causa.<sup>4</sup>

Where there are allusions to the political determinants of these choices they tend to take the form of generic references to the Marxist-Leninist ideology evoked by the brigatisti in their communiqués and other texts and to the military experience of the Resistance.<sup>5</sup> In most cases, however, the choice to enter an armed group tends to be attributed to familial or personal circumstances and sometimes, in the case of women, a psychopathological motive is suggested too. Yet it seems strangely inadequate to have representations where those who are, or were, involved in the armed struggle are shown as confused, with weak or naïve ideals (Chapter One), as troubled children (Chapter Two), as disturbed or deranged women (Chapter Three), or as exiles in search of a new ‘normalized’ life (Chapter Four).

One of the key points to make about such erasures from representations, and about the contents that these representations then substitute for the material erased, is that they both provide important evidence of how a social imaginary works in a given period: what it feels unable to speak about, compelled to turn away from, and what, on the contrary, it feels comfortable speaking about in its place. It is interesting, in this

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<sup>4</sup> Sofri, *L'ombra di Moro*, p. 152.

<sup>5</sup> The formation of the GAP (Gruppi Armati Partigiani) ‘which tried to recreate a partisan organization to fight an expected coup d’état, was an aberration’, according to Lumley, *States of Emergency*, p. 285.



respect, that it is not only writers of fiction who have emphasised the personal factors in retrospectively representing the *anni di piombo*. Those who were directly involved have also frequently insisted on the need to emphasise the personal in their memoirs, interviews and other testimonies. At the end of Chapter Three we quoted Barbara Balzerani's autobiographical *Compagna Luna* in which she gives prominence to the narrative of her childhood. Many of the self-narratives of the exiles in Paris dwell, as we saw, on the personal and 'normalized' life of the present and tend to exclude a narrative of past political activism. Valerio Morucci, former *brigatista* and author of a spy story, *Klagenfurt 3021* (2005), as well as an autobiography, *La peggio gioventù: una vita nella lotta armata* (2004), has insisted on the need to talk of the *anni di piombo* through fiction, eliminating political language and foregrounding the private dimension:

Il terreno di spiegazione politica di quello che è avvenuto era ed è totalmente occupato da quelli che non volevano che si spiegasse nulla di quello che era stato e quindi non è quello il terreno su cui si possa riandare a quegli anni. Inoltre sia nel bene che nel male i fatti si conoscono e si conoscevano, sono negli annali della storia del paese. Quello che non si conosceva e che non si conosce sono invece i risvolti emozionali, psicologici, sentimentali e personali di coloro che vi avevano partecipato e lì il linguaggio politico è impotente, lì ci vuole la letteratura. Non c'è altro mezzo e per questo ho cominciato a scrivere. Per l'occupazione di un terreno da parte di altri e l'idea che bisognasse affrontarlo da un altro punto di vista. (...) La fiction per me può avere molto più valore delle ricostruzioni. (...) Non sappiamo affrontare quegli anni perchè abbiamo un approccio troppo politico. (...) L'artista deve parlare un altro linguaggio.<sup>6</sup>

Sofri, in *L'ombra di Moro*, discusses the *Lettera ai brigatisti*, an open letter written by Elsa Morante in 1978 but not actually published until ten years later. He draws attention to the fact that Morante never once mentions Moro and talks to the brigatisti using their own language. This latter fact, he thinks, makes the letter 'bad'

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<sup>6</sup> Interview with Valerio Morucci, Rimini, 6 May 2005.

(‘brutta’) as a piece of writing.<sup>7</sup> One might suggest that directors and writers, in ‘erasing’ the political content of left terrorism, were aiming to avoid just this: speaking the language of the terrorists. However, it seems to me that the effect of this avoidance is that the terrorists are left without a voice of their own. Ironically, they are politically and ideologically depersonalized by these representations, as they depersonalized their own victims.

The ‘absent images’, the erasures in representation, are therefore important, just as the images that are present and visible are highly significant as symptoms of what a society finds symbolically central, able to deal with when it represses something else.<sup>8</sup> It is both these presences and the absences, the recurrent structures of representation and the erasures of representation, that I have aimed to grasp in this thesis. I have not sought to see how well these texts – novels, films and plays – correspond to or coincide with the accounts produced by historians of the *anni di piombo*, or to the ‘real’ historical events and actors to which they sometimes allude. My aims, rather, have been to give primacy to the images themselves, to understand the dominant themes, motifs and narrative patterns. In this respect, what Enrica Capussotti has written about films as sources for historical analysis applies to all the cultural texts in various media that I have examined here:

intrattengono un rapporto fondamentale con i processi di formazione individuale e collettiva, (...) riproducono modelli e aprono spazi per l’identificazione e il riconoscimento; allo stesso tempo, in quanto fonti, raccontano le rappresentazioni e le pratiche condivise, i contenuti del visibile e dell’immaginario di soggetti collocati nel tempo e nello spazio.<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>7</sup> Sofri, *L’ombra di Moro*, p. 82.

<sup>8</sup> John Orr, ‘The Absent Image and the Unreal Object’, in *Cinema and Modernity*, London: Polity Press, 1993, p. 86.

<sup>9</sup> Capussotti, *Gioventù perduta*, p. 21.

In order to draw out the 'contenuti del visibile e dell'immaginario' contained in these representations it has been necessary to privilege close textual analysis and the careful description of images and structures. I hope in this way to have demonstrated that the relations and recurrences of images in these texts are not just 'evidence for the historian's interpretation but an integral part of the interpretation itself'. When one takes them seriously as primary sources, 'imagination and fiction become part of historical reality and writing'.<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>10</sup> Enrica Capussotti, Giuseppe Lauricella and Luisa Passerini, 'Film as a Source for Cultural History: an Experiment in Practical Methodology', *History Workshop Journal*, Issue 57, Spring 2004, p. 259.

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Augias Corrado and Vladimiro Polchi, *Aldo Moro: une tragédie italienne*, first

performance: Théâtre De Galliffet, Italian Institute of Culture, Paris, 14

February 2005, directed by Giorgio Ferrara.

Baliani, Marco, *Corpo di stato. Il delitto Moro: una generazione divisa*, first

performance: Fori Romani, Rome, 9 May 1998 (commissioned and broadcast by

RAI 2) directed by Maria Maglietta.

Comitato di solidarietà alle vittime delle stragi, *Antigone delle città o dell'insepoltura*

*del corpo del fratello*, first performance: Bologna city centre (outdoors) 1

August 1991, produced by Valerio Festi and Monica Maimone, directed by

Marco Baliani, script by Franco Fortini, Gianni D'Elia, Franco Loi.

Comitato di solidarietà alle vittime delle stragi, *Antigoni della terra. Piazza Maggiore*,

first performance: Bologna, 1 August 1992, directed by Marco Baliani and

Bruno Tognolini.

Di Fresco, Antonio Maria and Maria Fida Moro, *L'ira del sole. Un 9 di maggio*, first

performance: Teatro Biondo Stabile di Palermo, Palermo, 9 May 1998, directed

by Antonio Raffaele Addamo.

Floris, Gianluca, *Lato destro*, first performance: Teatro Baretto, Turin, 6 April 2005,

directed by Gianluca Floris and Lorenzo Fontana.

Fo, Dario, *La tragedia di Aldo Moro*, first performed as a reading, Palazzetto dello

Sport, Padua, 21 June 1979.

Fo, Dario, *Clacson, trombette e pernacchi*, first performance: Cinema Teatro Cristallo,

Milan, 14 January 1981, directed by Fo.

Fo, Dario, *Quasi per caso una donna: Elisabetta*, first performance: Riccione, 7

December 1984, directed by Fo.



Luttazzi, Daniele, *Dialoghi platonici e altre storie*, first performance: Teatro Modena, Genoa, 24 November 2003, directed by Giorgio Gallione.

Maranzana, Mario, *I giorni del no*, first performance: Sala Umberto, Rome, May 1986, directed by Augusto Zucchi.

Silvi, Roberto and Cecilia Calvi, *Le ragioni dell'altro*, Teatro Studio, first performance: Rome, 'Rassegna Fontanone-estate', 29 July 2003, directed by Cecilia Calvi.

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